

LETTERS
OF
MADAME DU MONTIER,

COLLECTED BY
MADAME LE PRINCE LE BEAUMONT.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH,
BY
MISS NEWMAN.

VOLUME III.

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1797.

such a parent as your my dear Madam,
 I had no sooner ended my prayer, than
 I flew to the Countess's apartment,
 where I had never been since the first
 day of her illness; and as her attendants
 feared my sudden appearance might oc-
 casion some revulsion, they gave her
 notice of my intention, to which she
 attended by I found her very
 low spirit, and her apprehensions, and
 when I told her I remained hopes
 of seeing her, she looked to me, the
 pressed my hand, without looking at
 me, and bowed her head, but could
 not get a word from her other than
 at my first visit. To be sure, she is
 almost always asleep, and I will not
 suffer her to be awakened, so that it is
 very probable she has not seen me. They
 go in and out, but I have not
 learning to ask, if I shall be
 passes the doctor, who says he will
 his humours, but one may guess from his
 looks, he predicted her recovery.



LETTERS,

&c.

From the Marquis to Madame du Montier.

I UNDERSTAND, from the Marchioness, that she has imparted to you a vague conversation I held the other day respecting my son, which she ought, methinks, to have concealed, as it will draw upon you the importunity, or rather fatigue, of another letter from me, though upon condition you do not answer it, for I know you are overwhelmed with letters, and that besides

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our correspondence, you maintain one with all your other children : this may considerably impair a health too precious for us not to endeavour to preserve by every means in our power : and our most skilful physicians here assert, that too great an exertion of mind will irritate your malady, and render abortive every remedy you use, or rather ought to use, for upon my word, I have no reliance upon you in this respect, and when I call to mind, that in the dreadful agonies you suffered with your teeth, you laughed at our fears, telling us it was only pain without danger ; when, I say, I call this to mind, I am persuaded you treat your rheumatism very cavalierly, under pretence of its being nothing but pain ; but I shall dismiss this subject, on which I know you to be incorrigible, to assure you I am not so, and that you have conquered all my prejudices respecting education. It was merely from habit, I inad-

I inadvertently expressed a wish of masters for my son: in great towns we find masters for every science, except morality; but no one will undertake to instruct youth in the regulation of their passions, as it would be but an unthankful office. I am sensible that what my child would never learn in colleges, he will attain with you. I resign him, therefore, to your sole care, for as long a time as you shall think expedient, and I shall be perfectly satisfied to behold his heart and understanding formed by you. Would to God every other advantage had been sacrificed to that in my education, you would then have been spared a thousand pangs, and I as many more; for my whole life I have been a martyr to my passions. With regard to this last attack it was absolutely a piece of treachery; I thought I had so far vanquished them as to be incapable of such weakness. They seem to regard

the Count as their own domain, for they respected our beloved solitude. I am equally desirous, with your lovely daughter, to be all reunited there, but I know not whether our own wishes on this head ought to have any weight; we have duties here to fulfil, and certainly the commands of the best of masters are to be considered as a vocation from heaven. On this point, Madam, as on every other, I must beg your decision: you are our guide, and I shall always think it an honour, a pleasure, and a duty, to follow implicitly your advice; it has been too beneficial for me ever to swerve from it.

Madame du Montier to the Marchioness.

COURAGE, dearest child, you now begin to reap the fruits of your sacrifices. Henceforth, as I told you in
my

my last, my lessons will be useless ; for God himself will be your guide, without any interference of mine. You observe, that your resignation may be only founded on the tranquillity that has succeeded the late storm : this is saying too much, my dear Marchioness, it was not less in the time of your affliction ; let this reassure you. However, we have always reason to mistrust even that which appears best in us ; our goodness is a merchandise of a very mixed quality, and our natural corruption a worm, whose sting it is scarce possible to avoid. Let us humble ourselves, therefore, for the evil we commit, for the good we omit, and likewise for that we perform so imperfectly ; in short, let us humble ourselves at all times, or rather never lose sight of our true state, which is little above absolute nothingness ; but we should do it with tranquillity, and so as not to lessen the gratitude we owe to God, for the calm he vouchsafes

vouchsafes us after so dreadful a tempest. He knows our weakness; we are neither worthy nor able to bear his cross without relaxation: he allows us time for renewing our resolution and strength, to support the new trials he may see fit to lay upon us, and for which we ought to prepare our hearts. It is the portion of the elect, my dear Marchioness, and we should with reverence say of the afflictions of the cross, *Domine, non sum dignus; Lord, I am not worthy of them.*

I congratulate you on Mastrilli's departure, not that I apprehended any danger would result to you from his stay at Turin. I am firmly persuaded, the sacrifice you made of your former preference, was recompensed by its total extinction. You fancied you hated him before you heard of his going; no, my child, your heart is too just to repay so ill the services he has rendered you: it is the appearance of vice you fear and detest, and as soon as
you

you had nothing further to dread, gratitude regained its empire in your breast. Do not oppose the just esteem due to his virtues: all who know him extol his very amiable qualities; I pity him, sincerely, for, from the expressions that escaped him, I suspect he still loves your sister, and his leaving Turin increases my good opinion of him; for, in such a struggle, flight only can insure victory. You flatter yourself you shall quit it before his return; alas! my heart forebodes I shall not see you so soon: Providence seems to have destined you to do a great deal of good where you are: we must submit to its decrees. Commit the whole to the prudence of our dear Marquis, and let us also resign your poor sister to the Lord. I must confess it requires my utmost efforts to preserve my confidence firm and unshaken; the melancholy into which she has fallen, is a very bad symptom, from which I should apprehend the worst, had I not
 resigned

resigned her into the hands of God. What could she possibly want with *Mastrilli*? It should seem this interview occasioned his departure. Each moment convinces us how blind and ignorant we are, and that the ways of God are only just and wise.

I have had a letter from the Marquis, in which he fully consigns his son to my care: indeed, I should have been greatly bereaved had he been taken from me, though, be assured, my dear child, I would most willingly give up his delightful society, to promote his advantage, could I believe he were losing time here. His father seems now convinced that it is employed to a useful purpose, and that he is laying up a good foundation for the remainder of his life. You would be charmed with his aptitude for whatever is good and commendable, his heart outruns my instructions, and I appear less to teach him, than to confirm what he already knows,
and

and applaud his talents as well as his inclinations. He has none but what are of the most virtuous kind, though the return of his health has developed in him a degree of vivacity you have no idea of, which affords me infinite satisfaction; for I dread an insensible and fullen disposition. His constitution strengthens daily; but when you recollect the state in which you left him, you will conclude he is still delicate. I mark the progress of his understanding, his heart and his body, to give to each its proper exercise, and my plan is justified by success. I have told the Marquis, and I repeat it to you both, that the benevolent intentions of nature in her endeavours to recover herself ought not to be frustrated, and I am certain he could not be transplanted without great risk: of this you will have no doubt, when I tell you, that my legs are in so excellent a condition, that I could, though with some difficulty,

cross the mountains. You may conceive the ardent desire I have to be with you, especially in your sister's present situation, but I sacrifice these wishes to the will of heaven, manifested to me by the state of this infant, whom I will neither quit nor expose to a change of climate that might prove highly detrimental to him, particularly at this season which is severer than usual.

Madame du Montier to the Count.

GOD conceals from the great and wise what he is often pleased to reveal to the low and ignorant, because he will be acknowledged as the source of all knowledge and wisdom. This consideration, my dear Count, enables me to reply to your questions, otherwise I should have been ashamed of being consulted,

sulted, and wholly unable to solve your doubts. You had flattered yourself, that to become virtuous in reality, needed only the wish to be so: this idea is one of the greatest obstacles to virtue, inasmuch as it originates in a too great confidence in our own strength. Such is the unhappy appendage of our nature, that we can deprave it at our pleasure; but when it becomes necessary to repair the evils our perverse will has drawn us into; when we would heal the wounds it has inflicted, and consolidate our scars, we then find its impotency, and stand in need of a more skilful physician than ourselves. I can assure you, my dear Count, and I know it by experience, that philosophy can do nothing for us: it makes us exclaim against our follies, it makes us struggle with our chains, but that is all. The first step towards effectually breaking them is to be convinced of our own insufficiency: such a conviction naturally inclines us to implore the
divine

divine assistance which is never withheld from us, though, for wise ends, the Almighty sets bounds to his goodness and bounty. If, by his powerful help, we were suddenly to obtain a complete victory over our vices and passions, we should very soon forget to whom we owed it; we should arrogantly impute it to our own strength, and pride would usurp the place of our vanquished sins. It is good for me that I have been in trouble, said the pious royal prophet, who, though assured of pardon and forgiveness, was long sensible of the sad effects of his misconduct: read his expressions in the psalms: *my wounds stink, and are corrupt through my foolishness; my loins are filled with a sore disease, and there is no whole part in my body.* Such is our condition, my dear Count, our corruption would indeed be irremediable on our part, but we have the consolation to know, that help will never be denied, so long as we humbly confess
our

our weakness, and, by the perseverance of our prayers, procure the justice of God in our favour. It is right he should be sought of us, my dear friend, we have neglected him during so many years, and at the first word, we expect he should comply with our desires; such presumption cannot fail of lessening his grace in our behalf. You say, that till now, like many others, you imagined little was wanting to make of a good man a good christian. You may still continue to think so, without the least danger of error, provided you justly define the meaning of a good man; the appellation is in every one's mouth, though few know its real signification.

A good man is one whose regard for honour and integrity would induce him to lay down his life for their preservation, should necessity require it. After this definition, you are not advanced a step, unless you entertain right notions of honour. In your rank of life,
you

you estimate it by a contempt of danger, a readiness to lose your arms or legs in the army, or to murder one another for some ridiculous trifle. You think it obliges you to preserve inviolate, the word you have pledged to a friend, to abstain from ravishing by violence your neighbour's property, to pay your debts of honour, and to adhere to truth under certain restrictions.

Between a good man of this description, and a good christian, there is a very essential difference. He who would hold himself unworthy of the light of day, had he degraded himself by taking a crown from another's pocket, makes no scruple of ruining tradesmen and artists, by withholding their goods and wages for many years. When you read this, I know you will exclaim, O that does not regard me, I have ever been punctual in paying my debts: true, yet you are not the less a thief, suffer me to use the word. That young woman's innocence

cence whom you seduced, that husband's honour which you tarnished, those children's fortune which you diminished, by enabling one of your own to share it, however unentitled ; such dissimulation, falsely called policy, indiscriminately tending to crush those who stand in competition with us, that we may exalt ourselves on their ruins, is what the self-sufficient righteous man of the world allows himself without scruple. Now, according to my estimation, a good man is he who adheres rigorously to the moral law in its full extent, and who, on every occasion, would do to others as he would wish they should do to him. For such an one to become a good christian, one thing only is requisite, namely, to purify the intention by acting from supernatural motives. Examine yourself by this rule, my dear friend, and you will find a large discount. As to the rest, I will tell you, for your comfort, there are certain steps which lead us far on the
road

road of either virtue or vice. The sacrifice of your hatred, as it was painful, will render other sacrifices more easy, if you do but steadily pursue the course you have begun. I resign your wife to the disposal of God ; pray for her ; he can as well dispel her melancholy as calm her passion.

Madame du Montier to the Marquis.

DO you know, my dear Marquis, I regard your requesting me not to write, as a mere ceremony ? I certainly do write a great deal, and my correspondence is very extensive, but it is not true that I am exhausted by it ; on the contrary, I should be an object of compassion, were it not for this resource, which reunites me with my family, at this time so dispersed. Was it not rather to give me a hint that you had

no

no inclination to write any more yourself? For it must be owned, without offence, you are very indolent where letters are concerned, and if you had not been in trouble I should have had none of yours. The Marchioness is your secretary, and only the impossibility of transmitting through her means, what you had to say to me, induced you to conquer your aversion for this employment. Do not let this frighten you from a correspondence my regard for you renders dear. I am a very good sovereign, and know how to compassionate the foibles of my friends; of this you have a proof in my precaution of sending this scrap of paper in order that you may communicate my other letter to your wife, and commission her to answer it. I trust you will never again be under the necessity of concealing any thing from her.

Madame

Madame du Montier to the Marquis.

I AM highly flattered, my dear Marquis, by your abandoning your dear child to my care. Believe me, you may rely on my affection for him, though you have reason to question my abilities; but certain it is, that God proportions these to the situations we are destined to fill. This is my reply to my daughter, who deploras her incapacity for fulfilling the duties of that employment, to which the king has done her the honour to appoint her. She ought to regard him as the instrument of the Almighty, who thus intimates his will, and with this persuasion should humbly submit without reflecting upon herself, a humility that would discourage her, cannot proceed from God, who never acts in contradiction to his own decrees.

I think it would be imprudent to remove your son, and that is the motive
that

that retains me here. I stand to him in the place of his mother, and my dear Marchionefs must be in mine towards her poor sister, on whose case I must likewise throw in a hint or two. Solitude will do nothing for her, she must be enlivened, and more especially treated with unalterable mildness.

I have just received a letter from my third daughter, entreating me to abridge the term I prescribed, before her taking the veil. I shall readily comply, provided they will prolong that of her noviciating for six years, for I am resolved not to consent to her final renunciation of the world, till she has attained the age of five-and-twenty. Her reason for thus pressing renewing her solicitations to become a nun, is, that one of my sisters has proposed an exceeding good match for her; a gentleman about thirty, of an agreeable figure, good connections, a fortune of twelve thousand livres a year, and universally esteemed

esteemed in our Canton. My daughter allows the many advantages of such an establishment, and even extols them to convince me that as she is not at present tempted, she never will be. I deny this inference, and assert, that God will regard her engagement from the hour in which she first designed to form it; that she is at liberty to live as retired as she pleases, and consequently need not be in a hurry to take the veil. I assure her the Almighty will not grant his blessing to any engagement formed against the will of those who are his delegates on earth; and as I expressly forbid her to bind herself by any vow, I forewarn her that if she disobeys my commands, her offering will be rejected by Him who loves obedience better than sacrifice.

*The Marchioness of * * * to Madame du
Montier.*

My Dear Mother,

I CANNOT conceive how my heart has been able to support the various trying emotions I have experienced since my last, which the sight of my poor sister has occasioned. She expressed a wish to see me, at the very time I was on the point of soliciting permission to visit her, as you thought company would rather be serviceable to her than otherwise.

The physician consented to her request, being determined not to contradict her in any thing. though he feared it might be attended with some unpleasant consequences, for reasons which he thinks I am ignorant of: indeed, I believe he would have positively refused it, had he not been afraid of awakening my suspicions.

I flew

I flew to the apartment of the dear invalid, and with what earnestness did I not, on my way thither, implore the Almighty to efface from her mind every fatal remembrance that might impede her recovery ! My first impulse was to run into her arms ; she gently repulsed me with her hand, and before I could either foresee or prevent her, fell at my feet, and clasped my knees so forcibly, that it was impossible to raise her from this humble posture. Ask me not what I then did ; I shrieked, I wept, I pressed her head in my bosom, conjuring her to rise ; I addressed my prayers to heaven, without knowing what I uttered. At length her woman assisted me in replacing her in her chair, where she sat for some moments tranquil to outward appearance, with her eyes fixed on the ground, but the motion of her lips, and the various changes of her countenance, plainly indicated much internal agitation. She then, without looking at me,

said,

said, pray for me, my dear sister, in the name of God, pray for me. Yes, dearest sister, dearest friend, I replied, embracing her in spite of her efforts to prevent me, I have never ceased praying to the Lord for you; and our excellent mother has so importuned heaven with her cries, that it cannot but be moved to restore you to perfect health.

Desire my women to leave the room, said she, in a low voice, and suffer me to be at your feet, the only situation that becomes me in your presence. I requested her chief attendant to go into the adjoining apartment, but she absolutely refused to leave me alone with her. She dreaded, she said, any return of her fury against me, for mad people, continued she, are very malicious; this apparent calm may portend a relapse, and who knows but she restrains herself now that she may get an opportunity of strangling you, as she has vowed to do a thousand times?

What

What expressions, my dear mother! and how barbarous to overwhelm me with them. She must have done it from ignorance, and I forgive her; these sort of people are very gross. To add to the cruelty, she affected to whisper, but it was so loud, as to be heard by the poor invalid. I saw her shudder as it were, raise her eyes to heaven, and seem to retire within herself; then, turning to her attendant, with a very mild and submissive air, you are in the right, said she, my sister should not be so exposed: grant me the satisfaction, she continued, addressing herself to me, of letting me write to your mother, and have the goodness to wait for and enclose my letter to her. *Your mother*, retorted the woman with a sneer, delighted with her own sagacity, as if *your* mother was not hers also: you see her brain is nothing less than settled. Heavens! cried I, you exasperate me past bearing; leave the room instantly, and never
enter

enter it again. O pardon her, resumed my sister, you know not half what she has had to endure ; besides, she is necessary to me, suffer her to return after I have written. I immediately procured my sister what she wanted, and remained in her closet an hour and a half, during which, I prayed with so much fervor, that my heart seemed to burst its prison, and fly to the throne of grace, to intercede with the Father of all mercies.

I was then recalled, and she gave me a letter directed for you, which is enclosed in this ; I found her more composed, but still extremely dejected. All went on well thus far, even in the nurse's opinion, till I unfortunately forgetting myself, told her the whole family would be transported with joy at her recovery ; that the Count and Marquis had been so affected at her illness, that I had trembled for their lives. At these words her eyes filled with tears, she

fobbed violently, and I was in the utmost consternation lest she should be suffocated: they forced me out of the room without her appearing to notice it; only think the mischief my imprudence occasioned.

The physician has just been with me; hearing of my extreme concern for the accident I innocently caused, he entered the room while I was writing to you, to sooth my affliction, which he has converted into the most extatic joy. He proclaims victory, and regards the tears our dear invalid has shed, as a favourable crisis; her dejection made him more uneasy than her passion, as it did you, but he concealed it for fear of alarming us. He says that her faculties have now resumed their course, and that she is on the eve of a perfect recovery. I fondly encourage this hope, my dear mother, and to tell you my mind, I think it far more advanced than they are willing to allow. I perceived not the

the smallest indication of insanity, even her sadness instead of alarming me, seemed a proof of her returning good sense, for she cannot reflect upon her past state without emotions that are well calculated to nourish her melancholy. Her letter will better demonstrate her condition than all I can say upon it: the sight of her has so affected me, I can write of nothing else, and must defer speaking of myself till some hours hence.

I have sent to invite the Marquis to walk with me on the Citadel side; for I have not yet had courage to go to the Valentine Quarter. I blush to own this weakness, and will strive to subdue it.

The Countess to Madame du Montier.

HOW Madam shall I begin this letter? The variety of reflections that crowd upon my mind, throw such

confusion into my ideas ; and the heinousness of what I am about to confess so distract them, that I know not how to give them utterance in words, though they press on me with a poignancy that harrows up my very soul. I must, however, resolve to penetrate this chaos, or more properly speaking, to remove this dunghill ; the term is yet too inexpressive of the idea I entertain of my own mind. I see, I feel myself degraded below the meanest of creatures, and yet I am certain of recognizing but the tenth part of my wretchedness.

Amidst the tumult of sensations that assail my soul, two will more especially for ever pervade it, and time itself can never diminish them. These are, shame and regret for having so grossly abused the mercy of God, and despising your salutary counsels, and gratitude for the miracles of bounty he has performed in my favour, at the time when my own
obduracy

obduracy and direful abuse of his goodness might have justly provoked him to annihilate me. O Madam! (for I am utterly unworthy to call you by a more tender name) what a total change has taken place in my ideas! what a veil is torn from mine eyes, and how insufficient would all eternity be to express my gratitude to that Almighty and benevolent hand that has removed it! I repeat it, Madam, some superior grace must be lent me to support the new light that beams upon me, for without it I should expire with horror at the contemplation of myself. Ungrateful child! unnatural sister! perfidious wife! unfaithful friend! I have forfeited, have trodden under foot all the duties that religion, nature, and honour prescribe. I am indeed a monster that deserves to be extirpated from the earth.

How keen were my sufferings in the presence of that virtuous sister! with what unspeakable shame did I behold
her

her loading with careffes the wretch who has employed all possible means to poison the happiness of her life ; who, in the transports of jealous rage, has wished to deprive her of honour, life, and what is still more valuable, reputation ! how can I ever repair the mischiefs I have occasioned to her, and all those who should have been most dear to me ? Ah ! madam, if acknowledging my crimes in the face of the universe could expiate them, heaven is my witness I would not shrink from it. To those about me would I have declared how unworthy I was of their care and attention, had I not been afraid of shocking them too much with the account of my wickedness. Before you, at least, I may be allowed to blush, and confess the excesses and atrocity of my corruption.

My reason has appeared deranged ever since the fortunate accident that God permitted, to bring me back to
himself

himself by means incomprehensible to us. Alas ! it was more fatally perverted before. The universal praises bestowed upon my sister, the sincere careffes, and well merited applause lavished on her by all, began to render her odious in my sight. I laboured to discover imperfections in her, and my inability to do it augmented my indignation. It gained such a height, that my husband at length grew insupportable to me by his just admiration, and his eternal commendation of her good conduct. I persuaded myself the love he formerly bore her was rekindled, and even dared to reproach him with it ; the mildness with which he strove to justify himself only aggravated in my eyes his supposed crime.

In fine, the king's testimony of esteem in chusing her as governess to his daughters wrought me up to the last pitch of hatred. To my pride alone was owing the impenetrable secrecy

crecy with which I veiled my sentiments. A martyr to that, what numberless efforts did it cost me to conceal within my own breast the dreadful effects of a base passion that preyed upon my soul, the meanness of which I could not dissemble. It inspired the horrid idea of ruining my sister's reputation, and of rendering her, if possible, as contemptible as myself.

The Count had once confessed to me that she formerly felt a degree of partiality for *Mastrilli*; this he did to stimulate my resolution, and related the heroic efforts she used on that occasion; which confidence, instead of exciting my admiration, was a fresh incitement to jealousy, and aided me to execute the dreadful plot I had formed against her.

One day that *Mastrilli* was paying some attentions to a young lady who disregarded them, I pretended to think him deeply enamoured, though they
scarce

scarce exceeded those of common politeness, and rallied him in these words;
 “ your heart is a very bad guide to your
 “ affections, since it has never pointed
 “ out to you the only object worthy of
 “ engaging them, and from whom you
 “ might have expected a return. The
 “ Marchioness is much our superior in
 “ every respect, and would doubtless
 “ have been sensible to your assiduities. I
 “ did not think you so formidable as to
 “ desire your absence, it was at her
 “ solicitations that the Count entreated
 “ you to leave Turin. In a woman like
 “ her, the fear of loving is an indubitable
 “ proof of love.”

No sooner had I pronounced this odious speech, than I became conscious of its direful import, but this affected me less, than the horror manifested on *Mastrilli's* countenance. He darted a look at me as he rose that stung me to the quick, and made him as hateful to my sight as was my rival. To remove

him from my presence it was that I represented to my husband the imprudence of suffering him to be so much at our house, and he followed my advice more, no doubt, out of consideration for the Marchioness than for me, for his coldness became daily more apparent in his behaviour to me, which I likewise imputed to the return of a passion that had been but half subdued. The Count's request to *Mastrilli*, made, I believe, more impression than all I had said, and with joy I perceived he eagerly resorted to every place where he had a chance of meeting my sister, whom he studied with an attention entirely novel, as if to read in her soul the confirmation of my assertion. Her timid virtue seconded but too well my malice: her deep blushes, whenever she surprised this nobleman's eyes upon her, and her precipitancy in withdrawing her own, conspired to make him suppose I had not deceived him, and that he still was to her an object of dread.

Such,

Such, madam, was my situation when it pleased the mercy of God to chasten and overthrow me. Judge of the excess of my blindness and infatuation; on the very brink of the grave, at the awful moment of being launched into eternity, the prospect of my soul's endless misery was less present to me, than was rage and vexation at finding myself abandoned by all, while every care was lavished on my odious rival. In this direful emergency I resigned myself to the justice of God, without one effort to awaken his mercy.

The force and violence of the passions that had possession of my breast deranged my intellects in a degree, but not so entirely as to deprive me of a superficial knowledge of what was passing around me, and in this melancholy state I continued, till your prayers forced (if I may so say) divine goodness to perform one of the greatest miracles in my favour, and my sister's virtue was chosen as the instrument

instrument for its operation. It is now about a fortnight since my ideas assumed some degree of regularity. The first glimmerings of reason discovered to me the humiliation of that condition from which I was emerging. My first impulse was to fly, and wander unknown where my crimes and my shame would alike be unheard of. I could not endure the sight of those who were deputed to attend me, and in order to get rid of their insulting looks, and remove them from me, I feigned to devote that time to sleep which was engrossed by all the horrors of despair. I beheld no resource from my misery: my sin appeared too heinous to admit the least hope of pardon; my passions had taken such root, that I deemed all endeavours to eradicate them useless and unavailing: I was become hateful to all about me. In this dreadful extremity, death only offered me shelter, and to death I determined to resort. The enterprise was attended

attended with difficulty, I was very narrowly observed, and my nurse hardly lost sight of me a moment. Despair prompted the means of evading her vigilance. Pretending a great inclination for sleep, I had my curtains closely drawn, and I resolved to strangle myself with the bell cord. Before I executed the horrible design, I lay perfectly motionless. My guard concluding I was in a deep sleep, conversed freely with one of my sister's women, who has never left me since the commencement of my illness, and as they were near my bed, I lost not a word of their conversation.

Good heavens! said the nurse, what strong passions the Countess has, and what an imperious insufferable temper she is of! How much trouble she must have caused the Marchioness, her sister, who is so mild and gentle! I am sure that lady, and all the family, would rejoice to be rid of such a dangerous mortal. You are mistaken there, replied
the

the other, and know nothing of my mistress when you say so. She loves her sister with unequalled fondness. I thought proper one day to tell her every thing this mad woman said about her, for which she severely reprov'd me, and promised to make my fortune if I would but keep her extravagancies a secret.

These words were like a ray of light bursting in upon my soul. I felt all my pride vanish away before such pure and heroic virtue, and was so horror-struck at myself that I shrieked aloud, which they attributed to the effect of a dream, for when the nurse approached, I feigned to be asleep. I would not lose one ray of that precious light that had so happily dissipated my obscurity. The contemplation of my own depravity was unaccompanied with that rebellious passion the usual consequence of humbled arrogance. I saw myself the most criminal of creatures, and whilst I abhorred

horred the crimes that had reduced me to this deplorable condition, I seemed to love the confusion that is and ever will be the result of them in my breast. My first impulse was an acknowledgment of divine goodness, and an ardent desire to evince my gratitude by every means in my power. Suddenly the conflicts I should have to encounter in my vow to lead a new life, presented themselves to my imagination, clothed in nameless terrors, and my heart shrunk from the undertaking ; but a fixed hope in the promises of Jesus Christ in favour of repentant sinners, revived and strengthened my soul ; the storm within abated, and I made a firm resolve to be unremitting in my supplications for that assistance which would not be denied.

Since that blessed day, I have never ceased to think that the excesses into which pride precipitated me were the first punishments of it. I now seem to
submit

submit voluntarily to the contempt of the whole earth ; the dread of humiliation has disappeared, and I feel as desirous of being abased as I should of swallowing a medicine that would save my life. The fear of committing an indiscretion alone withholds me from appearing in public to drink even to the dregs of the cup of ignominy prepared for me. I wait your commands on this head ; an implicit obedience is the only way by which I can repair my past errors, and this I dare venture to promise you through the Almighty's aid. Till I receive your instructions, I shall let every body about me suppose I am not yet sufficiently recovered to be trusted. With difficulty I have just restrained myself from unfolding to my sister the situation of my heart. By so doing, I am sensible I should anticipate her happiness, if the offence I have been guilty of towards her be not irreparable. She told me my illness had had

had such an effect on the Marquis and my husband as to endanger their lives ; alas ! I am too certain I no longer deserve to be so dear to them, as that the fear of losing me should so affect them, and this confirms my dreadful suspicions.

In proportion as I examine myself on what has happened during my malady, I fear that the secret imparted to me by the Count, respecting my sister and *Mastrilli* has escaped me. I have also some reason to imagine I informed the Marquis of my husband's former affection for the Marchioness, and thus have I doubtless endangered the repose of two people to whom I owe all I possess. Great God ! shield me from this dreaded calamity. I cannot positively affirm it to be so, you will be the best judge, and do not spare me in any thing I can do to expiate it if possible. In the mean time I have ventured to take a step which could no longer be delayed.

I requested

I requested to see *Mastrilli* alone, and confessed to him that my malady was entirely at an end, but I assured him it had commenced some time previous to our accident, as a proof of which, I mentioned the absurd discourse I held respecting my sister, for which there was not the least foundation in truth. I imparted to him my fears that something of the same kind had escaped me to the Marquis, and concluded by saying, if I had really uttered such a calumny, it became necessary to the peace of a family he valued, to absent himself from them for some time. Alas! my dear mother, this unhappy nobleman is another victim to my wickedness; my words had kindled a passion in his breast which will be the torment of his future life. He reproached me with it in very severe terms, and I too well knew how much I merited his indignation not to agree with him that he ought to overwhelm me

me with it. My confusion calmed his anger, he was affected at my situation, and left me without hatred.

Thank heaven he has followed my advice, though without having lost the flattering ideas I inspired.

I could have wished to have communicated this letter to my sister that I might have had the full measure of shame in her presence. You will discern the consideration that withheld me, which is regard for her ; in future I will have none for myself, a creature who has rendered herself so despicable in the sight of God, cannot be too much despised by men.

The Answer to the preceding.

WHEN a woman is in travail, says Saint Paul, she suffers great pain, but as soon as she is delivered, she remembereth

membereth no more her pains for joy that a man is born into the world. This, my dear child, is a faithful emblem of what has passed in my mind. For these last six months, I am not afraid of owning it to you now, I have been truly a woman in travail.

You are the only one of my children who endangered my life in coming into the world, yet if it had been possible, I would freely have undergone daily, the agonies I then suffered, rather than the thousandth part of the anxiety your alienation from God has caused me. All my woes are now past, forgotten, changed into such pure unspeakable joy, that it surpasses all expression. "Father of mercies! such are thy chastisements; thou canst convert "poison into a remedy." What do you not owe him, dearest child, for the great things he has vouchsafed to perform in your behalf? Well do you observe that eternity would be too short
to

to testify your gratitude. This happy change, which from mere outward appearance would seem hardly probable, this change I looked forward to; a minister of the Lord's promised and foretold it to me; without this hope, you would now have mourned my death, and accused yourself as the cause of it.

At the time of my bitterest affliction for your misconduct, I dragged myself to the parish church, in spite of my sciatica; there, like another Hannah, I prayed with so much fervour, that with her also I might have been suspected of being intoxicated, so earnest and vehement were the movements of my face and body. Our good curate, who is a perfect saint, judged me not so harshly, but believing I was ill, accosted me with visible alarm. Alas! answered I, as did the mother of Samuel, I am not ill, but am a wretched woman, whose
heart

heart is pierced with sorrow. Entreat the Lord for me that he will hear and grant my prayers; I implore of him to restore me a daughter, that I may consecrate her wholly to him. He will restore her to you, Madam, said this holy man, he will not resist such sincere and ardent vows. I received, as a promise from heaven, this artless assurance of the worthy pastor, and from that time have encouraged hope, which is now happily realised, since my dearest child is firmly resolved to ratify the vow I then made for her, and will from henceforth devote herself to God.

The portrait you draw of your past state, and the different gradations by which you sunk into the abyss of guilt, did not surprise me: alas! my child, I foresaw and bewailed them ever since the first letter I had from you after my recovery. I knew then the extermination of your pride surpassed the powers of reason; I again repeat, a
miracle

miracle alone could effect it, and it is only by their being multiplied every hour you can expect to sustain the conflicts to which you will yet be subject. You must not conclude that your enemy is absolutely vanquished; God has overthrown, and, if I may use the expression, treads him under foot; but a time will come, when he will suffer him again to rise, and exert all his influence over you. Then will be the trial of your repentance, your combats, and your victory; then will you merit that crown of glory, spoken of by Saint Paul, and which is bestowed only on those who fight to the end.

Were you required to engage in any enterprize the world calls great, exalted, or heroic, I should not doubt you; the tenor of your soul is firm, and danger would not appal it. But in this case, such courage becomes weakness: you have to fight against Goliath, and you can only meet him in the name of the

the Almighty, and armed with his strength. If you are thoroughly convinced of your own insufficiency, and of the efficacy of his aid, you will triumph, and will go as far in virtue as you have done in sin. You will make rapid progress in the new path he has marked out for you, if you but continue faithful to his word. For persons of your character there is no medium: violent passions lead either to great crimes or great virtues. On the part of the Lord, I am certain the work will be completed; he appears to conduct you, as it were, by the hand, and I am almost averse to interposing my advice. I shall yield to your desires in this respect, only from the motive of enabling you to join the merit of obedience to the other virtues you are about to practise.

And first I must counsel you never to lose sight of your late situation; contemplate with patience the depravity of

of your nature; tremble when you reflect on what would be your portion now, but for the merciful interference of heaven: I shudder while I write it, you would have been numbered with the condemned. Submit voluntarily to the humiliating consequences of your malady, and far from turning the conversation whenever it may lead to it, speak of it yourself in such a way as to convince others you will not be offended when it is brought to your recollection. I shall say nothing respecting your nurse, the spirit of God has already dictated the manner in which she ought to be treated; you owe her a great deal; act accordingly.

With regard to your husband, you can scarce conceive the extent of your guilt towards him, and how much you have to expiate. You have occasioned the misery of his life, and christianity only can induce him to forgive you. You ought not to hesitate throwing

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yourself at his feet, and, by a full confession of your faults, prove to him how sincerely you detest them. I know him sufficiently to assure you this will be an infallible means of regaining his esteem and affection.

I think you may even own to your sister your horrid jealousy and envy of her; conceal what relates to *Massrilli*; she would never be able to support the idea of his being acquainted with her partiality for him. It is difficult I know for pride to make such acknowledgments, but, if your repentance be sincere, you will find consolation in submitting to contempt, whenever prudence permits it, without ostentation. Observe this last word, my dear child: this is one of the rocks on which many split at their first return to God: they have a satisfaction favouring of self-love, in avowing their sins; beware of this peril; do nothing that bears the semblance of singularity; leave to providence the
care

care of creating opportunities to humble and depreciate you ; neither seek, nor evade them. Write to me often, and tell me ingenuously your progress in good, and also your frailties. Chuse an enlightened guide, from whom you may derive counsel and assistance, and do it without affectation or publicity. Practise christianity, not what is falsely styled devotion, which regards only the exterior, and under whose cloak is too often nourished every bad passion.

I commend your conduct respecting *Mastrilli*, whose presence must unquestionably be disagreeable to your sister, though she has not the least suspicion of the sentiments you suppose him to entertain.

I much fear your apprehensions of indiscretion are not unfounded; this is a fresh source of humiliation, which you may turn to good account. The only method of repairing this evil, if it exists, is by supplication and prayer:

offer them up unceasingly, and mine shall be united to them. Did I listen to the dictates of my heart, I should fly to Turin to embrace my dearest child, who was dead, and is alive again; but I must check this warm desire; providence has fixed me here, where I shall enjoy a new existence in reflecting on the happy state in which it has placed you. Now may I say with Simeon of old; *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.* My heart has not another wish, its desires are all fulfilled, and if to the many blessings he has bestowed upon you, he adds that of continuing you in grace, I may justly call myself the happiest of mothers, after having been for some months one of the most unfortunate. Farewell, my beloved daughter; restore to me the appellation nature has given me towards you; that of Madam, wounds me, though I venerate the motive that made you adopt it.

Madame

Madame du Montier to the Marchioness.

I SHALL write you but a few words, my dear Marchioness, for joy so entirely pervades my heart, that my pen is incapable of expressing my ideas. My predictions are verified, your sister's health is perfectly restored, and she has entered on the career of virtue with a heroism that makes me look forward to her attaining eminent perfection. I need not counsel you how to act towards her, charity will better dictate what you ought to do. Employ your utmost influence with the Count and Marquis to persuade them to diminish the weight of humility annexed to the situation of our dear penitent: If I mistake not, she would be sorry for this request, but we must leave the care of being humbled to her own discretion, and opportunities enough will occur without our seeking them out. As for me, my child, I have killed the fatted calf, that
is

is to say, I have given a dinner to all the poor of our parish, in token of grateful acknowledgment for the inestimable benefit we have received from the mercy of God. You would have wept with delight to have seen the grace with which our young Marquis attended upon the poor people: his head uncovered, and with as much respect, as if he had been serving him of whom they are the representatives. I was obliged to moderate his zeal, lest he should be too much fatigued; and, after the first quarter of an hour devoted to this act of charity, I led him back to my apartment, where he very gallantly told me I was grown young again, and looked as handsome as his dear mamma. Do not imagine this compliment made me vain, though it is certain, my face of yesterday and to-day scarce resemble one another. O what a wonderful stimulus is joy! I put your lowliness to a great proof, my dear Marchioness, by allowing your
sister

sister to inform you, that your charity and love were the means heaven chose to effect her conversion ; but I am persuaded you will give the whole glory to God for this blessed change, and that so far from arrogating any merit to yourself, you will be filled with sentiments of pious gratitude for his favour in making use of so weak an instrument to bring about so great a purpose. Adieu my child, I cannot stay long in my room ; I go every instant to the chapel, and by what passes in your own breast, you will guess my business there.

*From the Marchioness of ***, to Madame du Montier.*

O WHAT an affecting scene I have to relate, my dearest mother ! Our heroes are so overcome, that they declare themselves utterly unable to make
you

you comprehend what they have felt and still feel; for such impressions are not easily effaced. To me therefore they refer the task of imparting to you their sensations and their felicity.

How shall I describe my own? I have no other way of representing it, than by recalling to your mind that I experienced, when the physicians announced the crisis to be favourable, which they thought would have terminated your life.

As soon as my sister had received your letter, she sent for me, and seemed desirous of being alone with me. This time I interposed my authority with the terrible nurse, and commanded her to retire, though could I have foreseen what was to follow, I should have been far from removing the witnesses. My poor sister, prostrate on the ground, made, in spite of my efforts to prevent her, a confession which her humility has doubtless exaggerated. No,

I never

I never beheld such penitence as was depicted on her countenance. She conjured me to inform the Marquis and my brother of the return of her reason, and to bring them to her room; when she renewed to them the same humiliating acts she had practised towards me. What most surprised me, was the meek and tranquil air with which she owned her faults; one might suppose she took a sort of pleasure in vilifying herself, and incurring contempt; this is so foreign to her character, that both the Marquis and Count have since acknowledged, that had I not assured them of her recovery, they should have suspected her brain was still deranged.

Some days ago she requested father D*** to be sent for, a very worthy priest, but of no celebrity; to whom apparently she made a general confession. The day following she asked the Count's permission to go and return God thanks at church, which was granted

on my word. She perceives they are still doubtful of her recovery; and I can see her colour from time to time with emotion; then, as it were, retire within herself to check the risings of anger.

As soon as she returned from church, she entreated as a favour of her husband to take the woman into her service who nursed her during her illness, which is a truly noble effort, for I know from my own maid that she is an absolute *Megara*, who has used her very cruelly. I was at first tempted to tell the Count, but I respected the dictates of the holy spirit that actuates her, and thought it best first to consult you.

No sooner was it known in the city that she had been at church, than every body eagerly came to compliment her on her returning health. As she is not beloved, and knows it well, she was sensible this impatience to see her, arose from a malignant curiosity, desirous of
amusing

amusing itself with her behaviour; for notwithstanding our precautions, the nature of her disorder has transpired, through the indiscretion of the vile woman whom she is so anxious to retain. This did not prevent her ordering all to be admitted who came. It is impossible to describe the grace, mildness, and gratitude with which she received them; she attended all without distinction to the door of the apartments, to the utter astonishment of a number of ladies, to whom she formerly refused this honour, and who in fact had no right to it.

To-day was to be the severest trial of all; it was necessary to go and thank the king for the concern he has shewn during her confinement: to expose herself to the eyes of the whole court, where many would find a malicious satisfaction in her embarrassment. She completely disappointed them, and performed

formed an action which in her I consider as a miracle.

You are somewhat altered, said the king, but it is not to be wondered at, after so obstinate a fever. Your majesty will permit me to assure you, she replied, that my malady was not a fever, but an absolute derangement of the brain, which might naturally be expected. My duel with the Baron was an extravagance that predicted many others. How? rejoined the king, you speak very harshly of an exploit that proved you possessed extraordinary valour.

Valour, modestly resumed my sister, is not a qualification appertaining to our sex, but gentleness, delicacy, and humility, and these unfortunately I knew only by name. It is a blessing for me my reason was deranged; I could not but gain by it; and you have effectually gained, replied the king, presenting her a second

a second time his hand to kiss ; I find more true heroism in your present confession than in your combat.

May I own to you, my dear mother, a glance cast round the whole assemblage of courtiers, inexpressibly rejoiced me : how many long faces did I behold ! they thought to drive this poor woman to despair, by equivocal hints on her situation ; they must now relinquish this malicious triumph. I am very sure my sister had no other view but to humble herself ; I, who know her thoroughly, saw how nature struggled in the contest ; yet, it is certain, the most politic pride would have dictated exactly the conduct she has pursued. By having been beforehand with those who sought to mortify and abase her, she has necessarily obliged them to abandon their project.

The king, after bestowing many encomiums on my sister's ingenuoufness, turned to me, and obligingly said, he wished

wished not to divert my attention from her during her illness, but that now she was perfectly restored, he hoped I would justify the confidence he had reposed in me. You know, my dear mother, my natural timidity, what became of it at that moment I cannot tell you, but feeling myself endowed with a superior strength, I had the courage to throw myself at the feet of the best of masters. Sire, said I, heaven is my witness, that the lively sense of gratitude your majesty's goodness inspires me with, would make me think my life a poor sacrifice to serve you; that sacrifice I may affirm would be less the effect of duty than of the respectful attachment I bear my sovereign. It is this attachment dictates the objections I take the liberty of offering. Your kindness makes you regard my weak abilities in too favourable a light; my incapacity is unknown to you, or you would never have raised me to an honour, far, very far transcending

ing

ing my deserts. My conscience obliges me to entreat your majesty not to over-rate some appearances of virtue, which, contrary to my will, have imposed on my too partial friends; I owe this testimony to truth, that the little merit I possess is to be ascribed to the counsels of a mother, capable of forming the masters of the world. Suffer me then to beseech your majesty to confer that honour on her you destined for me, and until her health will permit her to come and devote the rest of her life to your service, I will not refuse to fill her place. Yet another favour I venture to solicit of my king; that he will allow me to wait her instructions before I enter on so dreaded and so arduous an employment, and one I should wholly renounce, did I not rely on the divine assistance, which will be accorded me through the means of a parent, who has been to me the channel of divine grace.

The

The king listened without interrupting me, or testifying the least impatience at an harangue that must doubtless have appeared long and tedious, on account of the difficulty I found in arranging my ideas : happily for me, he comprehended the language of my heart, and pardoned my inability of expression.

He granted me a fortnight to write to and receive your advice, enquired what prevented you from coming to us, and being told it was my son's ill health, he, with infinite condescension, expressed a wish, that it might be sufficiently improved to enable you to cross the Alps, and procure him the sight of an instructress, capable of forming such a pupil as me.

I am obliged to repeat his own words, my dear mother, for indeed he is deceived in me, and you know, as well as myself, that any other would have done more credit to your instructions. I feel truly mortified by the good
 opinion

opinion people obstinately entertain of me, because my conscience convinces me I do not merit it; if I remonstrate upon it, they place to the account of humility, what is merely an act of justice. I have no resource but in the hope of becoming what they believe me to be, and this hope may perhaps be realised, if I have the happiness of having you with me. You shall direct my conduct, my thoughts, my desires, and my most trifling occupations; I may possibly then claim some portion of the praises so liberally bestowed upon me.

I write immediately on quitting the palace, eager to obtain your advice concerning my future behaviour. I shall devote the fortnight that is granted me, to supplicating aid from above; unite your prayers to mine, for the like purpose.

I forgot to tell you that my sister, before she went to Court, sent for my woman, and after submissively begging her pardon for all the trouble she had occasioned

occasioned her during her confinement, embraced, and presented her with a purse containing three hundred ducats, telling her at the same time she had the Count's leave for so doing; for, added she, without his permission, I could not give you this small token of my gratitude; I have nothing of my own; the Count married me without any portion, for I was only a poor young lady. The woman ran to me, so enchanted with the apology, the present, and the noble generous confession, that she was perfectly wild. O, my dear mother, how greatly does this dear sister excel me, even in the commencement of her career! but do you not think she carries her excellence too far, in persisting to retain her nurse? Tell me your sentiments on this head.

The

The Answer to the preceding.

I AM greatly edified and delighted my dear Marchioness with your sister's conduct: she will excel in virtue I prognosticate, and as you justly observe, she begins in a manner to outdo you in your career. You will oblige me by entering very minutely into the details of her behaviour, for she herself thinks so little of what she does, that she will not name it to me. I am sensible how much she will have to endure from the new waiting woman she has chosen; but I think our regard for her would be poorly exemplified, by depriving her of this method of atoning for her faults. There are virtues arising from ostentation, which may do very well to feed and gratify our self love, and respecting these, I would recommend her to observe the nicest circumspection; but for those habitual virtues, which

which no one can witness, or even imagine, consisting in the daily support of our neighbour's defects, let her practise them as much as she pleases, I shall not oppose it.

Persons of a certain rank, my daughter, are surrounded with base flatterers; servants applaud the foibles and even vices of their masters, because such a mode usually engages their regard, and opens their purses. But what a preparative for the world to come, is one of those harsh, perverse, and blunt characters that are always telling disagreeable truths! attend to the following anecdote, recorded by Saint Athanasius.

A lady of elevated rank, who aspired to the perfection of goodness, requested this holy bishop of Alexandria, to give her for a companion, one of the widows that were supported by the church. The divine, who greatly esteemed this lady, selected one whom he had remarked for her piety, sweetness of temper,

per, and good education. At the expiration of some months, he enquired of the lady how she liked her companion. Not at all, replied she. What, said St. Athanasius, much astonished, can I have been mistaken in her? Has she been so imprudent as to fail in respect to you? Quite the contrary returned the lady; I complain only of her mildness and deference; how can I possibly make any progress in virtue with one so respectful and submissive? O, I comprehend you said the Saint; if that be all, I will content you. Among the widows afore mentioned, he knew one who always said the most harsh and cutting things, and who took a pleasure in dealing out injurious and quarrellsome language. He presented her to the lady, and questioning her some time after, upon her liking for this dragon, received for answer, that she was just what she wished: with the Almighty's grace, and this woman's assistance,

assistance, I hope to arrive at a great degree of patience. Your sister would I am sure have made the like reply; and let us so far respect her principles, as not to notice what she suffers from her attendant.

Did I not know and excuse the motive that induced you to mention my old figure to the king, I should reprove you very seriously for it. What an idea! to suppose at my age I would settle at court! no my dear child, Providence has placed you there, and has decreed that I shall remain where I am. You shall always have my advice and instructions, nay, I do not despair of paying you a visit, after which I will return to my retirement and family. Remember my love, I have three other daughters, the eldest of whom will remain in the convent, till she takes the veil, if that be her destiny; the other two I am in duty bound to educate myself. You will say I can bring them
with

with me, and by so doing, have them continually under my own eye. I will state to you the reasons that make me averse to this, and I trust they are such as your good sense will approve.

You, more than any one, are best acquainted with the straitness of our fortune. The liberality of my sons-in-law, has I know considerably improved our affairs, and I likewise know they would do still more, were I inclined to forget they have children of their own: but I am more than satisfied with our present condition.

Your husbands have both given up your small portions to your sisters, and their brothers in advantageous employments, have just resigned in their favour, all pretensions to the inheritance of your father. Thus circumstanced, I have sufficient wealth to settle them genteely in the country, and to make them perfectly happy, provided they can forget the superior fortunes of their elder

elder sisters. Their welfare depends on the moderation of their wishes, and I should have every thing to dread, could they witness the pomp and splendour that surround you and the Countess. I must not let them approach it too nearly. You think me necessary to your son; the education I would give him, cannot go forward in the great world; before he is exposed to it, I must have time to infuse into his mind and heart a spirit of christianity, and principle strong enough to withstand the allurements of example. If you wish it, I will bring him to see you as soon as his health will permit, but his stay must not be long; I shall then hasten my return hither, and take home my daughters. As the reasons no longer subsist that made me anxious to be at Turin, I shall esteem it a proof of your affection to suffer me to live quietly in my retirement. By the style of your
youngest

youngest sister's letters, I can discern that their imaginations are inflamed, and this in a place where they should be inspired with notions of humility: the longer they continue there, the harder will it be for me and for them to extirpate the seeds of ambition that have been sown in their minds. I foresee your reply to this. An employment that would give me consequence at court, would enable me to produce them to advantage, and perhaps to procure them a splendid establishment. I will tell you frankly, my dear Marchioness, I respected the decrees of heaven concerning your marriage, because I myself had no hand in it, though I will own I should neither have desired nor chosen it for you, and for these reasons. Because such men as the Marquis and Count are very rare, it would be madness to expect their equal for your sisters. Because these phenomena of probity and religion so seldom

found in a court, are more commonly to be met with in a retired sphere of life; and because happiness is totally independant of great riches, and is much easier attained in a middle station, than in exalted rank. I appeal to your own experience, my child, and to your sister's. Heaven has favoured you both with husbands, selected from among a thousand; I might say ten thousand; nothing of what the world thinks conducive to happiness seemed wanting to your lot; and yet, how small a portion of serenity have you enjoyed! Never did corroding care, the venom of ambition, of envy, disgrace, or misfortune, approach you in our blissful and humble dwelling; it was, you well know, the abode of peace and tranquillity, and you would have found them in establishments more suited to your fortunes. The crosses you have endured, were certainly in the order of a merciful providence; you stood in need of a counterpoise.

counterpoise. Adversity has been the healing medicine of your state; but a medicine you would not have required in your primitive condition. I have no inclination to expose your sisters to the necessity of such bitter remedies. Were a prince in their offer without my interference, I would shut my eyes to the dangers of their elevation, as I have done to yours: I would rouse up my faith to believe, that God, who had raised them to it, would sustain them by his grace; in short, I would support their exaltation, but I would not seek it.

I think you have too much good sense not to enter into my ideas.

You desire my advice on the important trust you are going to undertake. I will not dissemble with you that I think it a very arduous one indeed. There is one thing can alleviate it, which is, that from all I have heard of your king, I consider him superior to the usual faults of his rank and station;

tion; a superiority, owing as much to his christianity as to his good disposition. It is too often the case, that those entrusted with the education of the great, must look for commendation only, as they render themselves unworthy of their employment: it becomes a source of the bitterest chagrins for such as are worthy of it, and their pupils' hatred is most commonly the salary, the only one on which they can depend, under circumstances very difficult to be conciliated. I know that your princesses have excellent dispositions, which will render your task easy and delightful, if they listen to yourself alone; but how is it possible to elude that crowd of parasites who are ever upon the watch to pervert the best of characters? Yet, in spite of all the unpleasantness that must necessarily be your lot, there is still a satisfaction left which no one can take from you; this is the reflection of having fulfilled your duty,

duty, and this alone would be sufficient to compensate for all your troubles, however great they might be.

The first lesson to be inculcated in the minds of princes, is a right notion of what they are both towards God and towards men. The homage offered them from their cradle, tends to persuade them they are of a superior nature to the rest of mankind, and that their rank entitles them to the consideration of the supreme being himself. I shall never forget a sentence your father heard from the mouth of a Dutcheß, and by which only himself, and one other person in a numerous company, appeared shocked. This other person, who was a lady of exalted piety, was deploring the everlasting fate of a great prince, whom sudden death had deprived of the opportunity of imploring mercy and forgiveness for a licentious and vicious life. Madam, said the Dutcheß, believe me, God will think twice before

before he condemns a man of his consequence: all the company were of the like opinion.

Have we not read of a great monarch being much surpris'd at the temerity of a confessor, who refused absolution to his mistress, being only a simple curate? He consulted Mons. Bouffet and Mons. de Beauvillers to know if the curate had a right so to do; it is true he submitted to the testimony of these two exalted characters, and commended the holy man's conduct when he knew he had not exceeded his power; but it should seem, till then, he was ignorant that the birth and splendor of the great will not exempt them in the eyes of the King of Kings; till then he thought the throne dispensed him from observing those laws to which others were subservient. Yet the mother of this monarch was pious, and doubtless had instructed him on this most important article; but her lessons had been too

too superficial to make him capable of withstanding the eloquence of flattery ; besides, in many points, her conduct disagreed with her precepts. She loved the king to such an excess, says Madame de Motteville, that she told her second son she should take the elder's part against him, even though he were in the wrong. Was not this insinuating to the young monarch that the rules of justice and equity were not made for him ? Now these insinuations, however trifling they may appear, make a far more durable impression, than do the best of principles, however strongly enforced by precept, because they favour the unhappy tendency of man to throw off every yoke of duty.

My child will not fall into this error : she will carefully and emphatically inculcate on her young and illustrious pupils, those noble sentiments of David, which he was not ashamed to express to the insolent Michal, who blamed him

him for the public homage he rendered to God, and pretended he had debased himself in the eyes of his people.

Can I humble myself too much before the Lord, who has preferred me to your father to give me the kingdom of Israel? She will point out to their observation, that the Almighty chastised the ridiculous and misplaced pride of this woman; he afflicted her with barrenness, says the Scripture, that she might not bring into the world any children to resemble her.

But the mere repetition of these instructions will not suffice; you must do all in your power to impress them on their hearts, and the most efficacious way for attaining this point is, to convince their understandings. A principle, arising from perfect conviction, is indelible. You must therefore take every opportunity of persuading them, that as they are formed of the same materials as the meanest of their father's subjects, so they have nothing according to nature that distinguishes

distinguishes them from them. Cold, heat, pain, sickness, and death, respect not their dignity; they are subject to the calamities incident to humanity; in this therefore they are upon a level with the rest of mankind, and like them also, are in absolute dependance on the Supreme Being, in whose sight all their magnificence is as an atom, and by whom they are undistinguished in the dispensations of his grace. The poorest beggar, the lowest mechanic, were with them made children of God by baptism, members of Christ Jesus, and temples of the Holy Ghost. With them they have the word of God to enlighten, repentance to purify, and the blessed Eucharist to nourish them to life eternal. With them they are destined for a place in heaven, where they will be their equals, perhaps their superiors.

If God shews any preference to the rich or poor, it is wholly in favour of the latter, whom he seems to cherish in

a peculiar manner. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, says David, and hath exalted the humble and meek. The Psalms are full of this pious king's exclamations on the misery of the insolent great. You must have them extracted, and make the princesses learn them by heart. Observe to them the words of Nathan to the same monarch, when he reproached him with the violation of God's commandment. *I loaded thee with wealth and honours, and I would moreover have given thee such and such things. I raised thee above all the rest, and yet thou hast broken my law.*

You must continually remind them that their rank gives them no privilege, no exemption from the observance of God's statutes. Nothing should lessen their performance of these duties, they have even stronger motives to practise them, than those of inferior stations; because God frequently chastises the crimes of princes in a public and signal manner; one may truly

truly say he is more indulgent to the poor and needy. Read how he punishes the disobedience of Saul, the obstinacy of David in numbering the people, the vanity of Hezekiah, &c.

A thought strikes me, my dear Marchioness; suppose you were to get extracted from the Scriptures and Psalms all the passages at which I have hinted, together with the different punishments the Lord has inflicted on kings: these extracts you might have printed, and make use of this book to teach your princesses to read; in order that these divine truths, by frequent repetition, may sink deep into their hearts, and be incorporated with them.

The king cannot fail of approving this method; his religion will demonstrate its utility, and you will thus effectually instruct your pupils in what they owe to God, as creatures, and as belonging to the throne, on which alliances may one day place them. After
this

this important knowledge, of what they are with respect to their Maker, it is requisite they should learn what they ought to be towards their fellow creatures.

Nothing happens in this life, without the wise interposition of Providence. Out of every occurrence it can bring forth good, even out of the vices of men, for the perfection of his work, and the benefit of the universe. Ambition first made kings; ambition is certainly an evil, yet this evil God makes his instrument to introduce order amongst men. How few princes learn this great truth!

As soon as they are capable of judging for themselves, and are come out of the hands of those entrusted with their education, but who have perverted their inclinations, were they to be asked, Is it a blessing to be born a king? they would reply, either by words or actions, according to the ideas they had imbibed, yes, it is a blessing. A king is rich, wears splendid

splendid apparel, and lives well; every one respects him, no one dares to contradict him: he never controuls himself for any body, and all are under controul to him. If he does wrong, those appointed to judge other men cannot punish him.

To those you are to instruct, and who may in time become queens, teach a very different catechism, that they, upon being asked the same question, may answer; doubtless there are numberless advantages attending sovereign sway, inasmuch as it enables the possessor to do a great deal of good; but these advantages are considerably overbalanced by the evils inseparably attached to kingly power. The great never do all the good they wish, and often occasion mischief they never intended. They cannot make one happy, without rendering a hundred wretched; flattery forms around them a thick cloud, through which truth cannot penetrate. 'Tis their gifts alone are valued;

valued ; they cannot hope to find one real friend ; their rank, their favours attract regard, not their persons. Their faults cannot be concealed, all are known, exaggerated ; and at the final judgment of the world, they will hear themselves accused of a multitude of crimes they have occasioned, either by their bad examples, their ignorance, or their neglect. The divine law is much more difficult for them to practise, than for other men ; what continual violence must they do their inclinations to preserve humility in the midst of honours and adulation ! forbearance in the midst of riches, temperance amidst continual feasts ! They may be truly said to be like Tantalus, surrounded with false pleasures, afraid of touching them, lest they should sully the purity of the christian character, or run the risk of losing their soul, by plunging into the enjoyment of them.

My dear brother, said one of the princesses of France (whom heaven snatched

snatched away in the bloom of life) to the Dauphin; our condition is a very wretched one, inasmuch as we continue in our errors, and no one loves us sufficiently to warn us against them.

This is the grand misfortune, for which you must prepare your pupils. Be not afraid of raising their fears, there will be people enough about them to dispel them. Repeatedly observe to them that the means of converting into a blessing, the misfortune of being born a princess, is to do all the good in their power, as I have already said, and point out to them the various kinds of good they are obliged, and indeed may perform.

The first and most important is a good example. Well may it be said, the manners of the people depend on those of the great.

They must edify by their behaviour in the house of God. If they there conduct themselves with decorum and respect; if they never suffer themselves to
talk;

talk ; if they pray with fervour and attention ; who will dare commit any irreverencies ? They must edify likewise in conversation. If they never indulge themselves in such, as may wound the ears of charity and decency, if they withhold their favour and esteem from such as deviate from the rules they themselves observe, they will soon put to silence slander, calumny, and indecent language.

They ought also to set the example of moderation and modesty in dress. Though their rank obliges them to dress magnificently, it does not require them to follow those fashions that militate against female delicacy. It is for them to set the ton, and they will effectually do it. If, in their circle, they testify a degree of contempt for a woman who exposes her bosom, if they turn away with silent indignation from such as dare appear before them in this state, they will soon put to flight those nudities that are incompatible with the sanctity of christianity,

christianity, and that chaste decorum that ought to be the chief characteristic of the sex.

Warn your pupils to shut their ears to flatterers; convince them thoroughly that adulation is a real insult. People will praise them to excess, only because they think them silly enough to be gratified with such incense, or that they will repay it with their confidence or gifts. Let them from the first express a decided aversion for this meanness, and they will force all who approach them to seek their favour by more honourable methods. Let them be deaf to every slanderous report, and if they discover that any one has attempted to deceive them for the ruin of another, let them publicly banish the traducer from their presence, thereby to intimidate others from the same offence.

Inculcate this important maxim on their minds, that high birth, and elevated stations, ought to be to the possessors

lessors incentives to virtue and piety ; but endeavour at the same time to give them a right idea of the sort of piety proper for a queen or princess. There have been more than one, who from a misplaced devotion and overacted sanctity (and such it must be if it prevents their fulfilling the duties of their station) have alienated their consort's affections, and precipitated them into libertinism and dissipation.

It would require a volume, my dear child, to enter into every minutiae of your employment. I must leave the rest to your own prudence, and more especially to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, whose assistance and direction you must constantly implore. It will be this spirit rather than your own industry or ability, that can convey your lessons to the hearts of your pupils, and cause the good grain to take root and produce a hundred fold.

Farewel,

Farewel, my love ; write to me upon every emergency, and every doubt ; not that I think myself sufficient to extricate you ; but the God, who is the author and lover of order, will bless the confidence of a child in its parent, and will recompense you with the knowledge in which I may be deficient, but which I trust in his divine goodness to bestow in proportion to your necessities.

The Countess to Madame du Montier.

I KNOW not how to summon resolution sufficient to acquaint you with the dreadful and fatal stroke, the hand of heaven has thought fit to inflict. My poor sister, too much overcome with her misfortune to be able to write herself, has commissioned me to impart the sad intelligence. We have lost the Marquis, my dear mother, but the
direful

direful moment that snatched him from us, was preceded by circumstances that will make his last end precious in the eye of faith. This trial was alone wanting to my sister's sanctity. Were it not for the perfect resignation to which she has accustomed herself in every instance of her life, you would now have to mourn her loss, as well as that of her husband; but religion is her support.

It is scarce possible not to think our r Marquis had some presentiment of his approaching dissolution; he conversed upon it freely for near a month past, though he owned he was never better in health. The three last afternoons of his life he went out without our having the smallest suspicion of his occupation.

Four days ago his valet brought him, as usual, the broth he takes in a morning. You know he always reposed great confidence in this man,
and

and accordingly told him he would not drink it then, as he was going to finish a general confession he had felt a strong inclination to make; that afterwards, he hoped to receive the sacrament, and then go to his lawyer's to sign his will, which he had altered the preceding evening. Good God! Sir, said the valet, with tears in his eyes, wherefore all this sad precaution; are you ill? My poor fellow, replied the Marquis, I assure thee I never was better; but the prophet tells us, that life borders upon death, and I am resolved in future never to begin a day without reflecting it may be my last; this precaution will not hasten death, and is a sure means of living well. For the rest, added he, tell the family I cannot dine to-day where they are invited, they keep too late hours for a man who will be fasting, and besides, I have dedicated the whole of it to reflection and prayer. Thou wilt inform the Marchioness that

I absolutely

I absolutely insist on her not breaking her party, and that she will disoblige me extremely by thinking of it. Have a pullet and my soup prepared for me against my return.

My sister was engaged in her usual attendance on the princesses; the valet therefore went to her, and so positively and repeatedly assured her that his master wished her to go to the Count D——'s, where we were all to dine, that he at length persuaded her to comply. I dressed myself in the same intention, and, upon entering the Marquis's room, found him at his dessert. Surprised at the change he had made in our party, I enquired the cause, and expressed my fears that he was unwell. Dismiss your apprehensions, he replied, for some time past I have slept eight hours without waking; I have kept to this regimen of my chicken and soup, and my pulse is like that of an infant. So saying, he held out his hand to me, and,

and, in the same moment, fell back in his chair and expired. My screams soon brought the whole house into the apartment : priests and physicians were fetched ; alas ! all in vain, for he was no more. My husband, who was witness to this melancholy scene, fell into a state little short of death, and I myself was so overcome, so terrified at what had passed, that nothing but the thoughts of my poor sister supported my scattered spirits.

I had the Count carried to my own apartment, and dispatched a footman to my sister, entreating her to come to me, for that he had been seized with a fainting fit, which prevented our joining her. During this interval the Count recovered his senses, and I instantly convinced him how important it was to prepare the Marchioness by degrees for the knowledge of her misfortune. She came in just after, and the Marquis's valet having told her he was to be absent the whole afternoon, she

she was not alarmed at his non-appearance, but insisted upon his being quickly apprised of his friend's situation. He has been very ill indeed then, said she, seeing us all in tears, and perceiving his confessor, who is the general one of the family. The physician, who had had his instructions, told her he was not absolutely out of danger, which threw the poor Marchioness into inexpressible terrors; the sad prelude of what she was afterwards to endure. My grief, alas! exceeded hers; in the evil she dreaded, there was still some hope, but the loss I deplored was irreparable.

The confessor taking her aside, besought her not to flatter herself, for the doctor assured him the malady would be fatal. For God's sake, Madam, said he, rouse up your fortitude and religion to console your afflicted sister.

You must now prove the truth of St. Paul's doctrine, that christians do not mourn their relations like pagans, from

from the certainty that what is actual death to the infidel, is to them only a temporary sleep, and the passage to a better world. I will go and stay by the sick man, while you retire with the Countess, and force your own grief to silence, while you set before her eyes every motive of submission to the divine will your faith can suggest. She answered only by a sigh, and raising her hands and eyes to heaven, and suffering herself to be conducted to my closet, whither I followed her, she spoke so forcibly, during an hour we were there, of the resignation I owed to God, that she seemed inspired from above. What were my emotions all this time! I cannot describe, you will best conceive them. The trial to which we were exposing this too susceptible heart, made me shudder with dread of her sufferings when she became acquainted with her loss.

VOL. III.

F

You

You may suppose there were surgeons and attendants about my brother's body, and I could not help secretly encouraging hope, as an extreme lethargy sometimes has all the semblance of death. I was therefore doing all in my power to retain my sister as long as possible, to give those about the Marquis time to make every experiment that would be thought of the least avail.

The doctor pressed me to take a cordial to revive my spirits, and the Marchioness to induce me, consented to set me the example: she enquired every moment if the people were returned, whom she had dispatched to seek the Marquis, and was wretched at the idea of the effect this calamity might have upon him. I was engaged in supplicating the Almighty to assist me in discovering the truth to her, when I heard loud cries all over the house, and
amidst

amidst the confusion of voices, discerned, the Marquis is not dead, he has moved. My sister, who heard it at the same instant, flew to the door with such velocity, that it was impossible to stop her, and rushing through the crowd of domestics that surrounded the bed, she threw herself on the body, and sunk deprived of sense and motion.

They transported her to my room, and put her to bed without her recovering her senses, and it was some hours before she opened her eyes. We kept up the idea of her husband's being still alive, and that a violent attack of an apoplexy, had made us believe he was dead. Her first care was for his soul; the confessor, who continued by her all the time, reassured her by relating the manner of his death as I told it you in the beginning of this letter. He enlarged upon the strictness and piety with which he had fulfilled

every duty, though ignorant of the prompt necessity for so doing.

This account seemed to divert her grief, and finding she could not obtain permission to be by the Marquis, she closed her eyes, and prayed inwardly with a fervency that would have melted the hardest heart. From time to time she stopped, to enquire after her husband ; and the Count thought it would be best to profit by the moment when her mind was strengthened by prayer, to inflict the terrible blow, which sooner or later she must receive. Our silence therefore to her last enquiry, informed her of the truth. I trembled for the consequences ; but I knew little of the power of faith when I dreaded them from her. It was to the Almighty my afflicted sister addressed herself, and for more than a quarter of an hour, she sacrificed to him what was dearest to her on earth, in such moving terms, as would have softened stones. All present,

present, burst into tears, even to the physicians.

They judged it expedient to bleed her, and she presented her arm without the smallest opposition. The fountain of her tears was dried up, and she testified such outward composure, that one might have doubted if she had known her misfortune.

As soon as they had tied her arm, she addressed the Count in these words. My dear friend, I have two favours to request of you, which I assure you beforehand, by refusing to grant, you will deprive me of the only consolation in your power to bestow.

The first is to inform me of every circumstance relative to my loss, together with my husband's last words; the second is, to permit me to approach his much loved remains. The result of this condescension, you need not apprehend; persuaded as I am, that he is now in the bosom of his God, I should

blush

blush to show myself unworthy by immoderate bursts of woe, of having been the wife of a predestined blessed spirit. I shall not contemplate his body under the fatal aspect of death ; I shall behold it glorious and immortal ; and such as I hope to see it at the last day : this gratification only is able to restore peace to my soul.

For some time they deliberated whether to comply with her request ; at length the Count and her confessor determined to satisfy her wishes, and the event justified their indulgence.

The valet was called in, who, drowned in tears, related his conversation with his master in the morning of that day ; I then, summoning all my resolution, recounted the incidents immediately preceding his dissolution, and the last words he uttered. She listened with an eager, but placid attention ; as if desirous of collecting in her mind all the motives for grief on one hand,
and

and resignation on the other. She then rose, and with a steady step, proceeded to the Marquis's apartment; where, falling on her knees at his bedside, and respectfully kissing his hand, fixing her eyes on his face, which the horrors of death had spared, she prayed in silence with a zeal and fervour that must have softened heaven in his favour, had he yet any errors that remained to be expiated. She seemed herself persuaded of it; her face, before pale and dying, by degrees reanimated, and turning towards us with a countenance where shone all the brilliancy of faith and hope; he is happy, said she; let us not profane, by indecent sorrow, this day of his triumph. He gave to eat to Jesus Christ, when he was hungry; he clothed him when he was naked, he visited him when he was sick; and the God of all goodness and beneficence, whom we cannot surpass nor equal in generosity, has rewarded him tenfold

in

in this life, by inspiring the resolution of reconciling himself with his maker, during his few remaining days; and at the instant when his soul left the body, he said; come thou blessed of my father, come and possess the kingdom prepared for thee from all eternity. O blifs unspeakable! O glory not to be conceived! Almighty God complete thy work; thou hast crowned but a part of him; the other part still lingers in this valley of tears: shorten the period of her exile, or if thy wisdom sees fit to prolong it, grant that I may be unalterably united to that half of myself, which has no other occupation but to adore thee and sing thy praises.

And thou, dearest husband, happy in the bosom of thy God, forget not thy afflicted wife, whom thou hast left exposed to the perils of a stormy sea. Thou art now convinced I never desired for thee aught but the glory thou hast attained; the salvation of my own soul

was

was not dearer to me than thine ; it was the end of all my thoughts, words, actions, and prayers. I feel that death has not dissolved our connection ; the affection I bore thee was stronger than death itself. Thou lovest me still ; thou wilt never quit the throne of God, but wilt, without ceasing, make intercession for me ; thou wilt adore him, love him, return him thanks in my name, and wilt be a mediator for me till that happy moment that shall reunite us for ever.

You know, my dear mother, I am nothing less than inclined to believe in supernatural things ; yet, whether my imagination was inflamed by my sister's language, or whether it pleased heaven, by a visible sign, to console and fortify this heroic christian, certain it is, we thought we perceived a motion in that cold and lifeless hand, on which she had pressed her lips, as if to testify his consent to the prayers she had offered

up. My sister firmly believes this miracle, and another, which I regard as great, and must appear so to all who know her, is, that this woman, naturally so timid, so reserved, spoke for more than an hour with the utmost strength and dignity; for I give you but a small part of her words.

She was interrupted by the lawyer who had heard of our loss, and who came to propose the opening of the will. I send you a copy of it, my dear mother; it is worthy of being transmitted to our great grand-children.

We kept the Marquis's body three days, on account of his sudden death, which we passed round the bed; my sister could not be prevailed on to stir from it, except to take a few hours rest. Some friends who came to condole with her, returned home full of admiration at her fortitude, faith, and composed grief, and some, actually smiting their breasts. The king had the goodness

ness to send to visit her in the first moments : and the Count, immediately after the funeral pomp, went to thank him in the Marchioness's name, and to request permission to conduct her to your retirement, where she wishes to spend the time of her mourning ; and to spare you the surprise of her sudden appearance, I have surmounted my own grief to give you this detail. I do not much insist upon accompanying her, as my advanced pregnancy makes it my duty to be careful of myself, and besides, this place affords me many advantages I could not reap with you. I am here most completely humbled, for not a day passes, but offers me some opportunity of vanquishing my pride : it seems as if every body had forgotten the dictates of humanity in my behalf, and took a pleasure in mortifying me. Some little time ago a lady said to me, good heavens ! how shocking to have been pregnant in such circumstances as those

those you lately laboured under; it is much to be feared your child will partake of your malady! in the first impulse of vexation I should have flown at her with fury; but God sustained me, and I answered with moderation; do not be alarmed, my malady did not proceed from any derangement of my faculties, but from the violence of my passions, and I trust the Almighty's mercy will preserve my child's head from being affected by it. So much was I enabled by his grace to resist this temptation to anger, that the same lady having praised a piece of porcelain that stood in my room, I felt a real pleasure in presenting her with it, as an acknowledgment for the service she had rendered me.

I made use of the words, funeral pomp, in speaking of the last duties paid to the Marquis, but they were never more misapplied, for my sister insisted upon his last wishes in this respect being scrupulously adhered to.

COPY

COPY OF THE MARQUIS'S WILL.

IN the name of the most holy Trinity, whom I love and adore with all my soul and strength, I profess that I die in the faith of the holy catholic and apostolic church; believing with heart and mind all that it teaches, as the organ of the holy spirit.

I leave to Madame du Montier, my much respected mother-in-law, twenty thousand livres once paid, as an acknowledgment for the service she has done me ever since my connection with her family, but more especially in the last instance, in opening my eyes to a passion of which I was in danger of becoming the victim.

To each of my unmarried sisters-in-law, I leave five thousand livres; to my Valet de chambre three hundred livres a-year, and I recommend him to the Marchioness; to each of my other domestics,

domestics, a recompence which I submit to her discretion, whom I make sole heir of all that appertains to me at the day of my death ; being willing that my son should depend entirely on her affection.

I am perfectly easy respecting the fate of this dear child, well knowing I cannot better ensure his welfare, than by committing him to the guidance of such a mother.

Having seriously reflected on this precept ; *If thou hast much, give plentifully,* I cannot help acknowledging that hitherto my alms have been too moderate. Therefore from henceforth I destine the half of my revenue to the poor. If by any accident I should lose this half, I must retrench my expences ; and for the future will do that for the love of God, I must then do from necessity.

If I die, I request the Marchioness to take from my income wherewith to subsist her house genteelly ; and I wish the
overplus

overplus to be expended in good works, rather than hoarded up. My wealth, as it is at present, will suffice for my son, if he is a good man, and if he is not, it will be much too considerable. I therefore exhort the Marchioness to leave him no more than she shall judge him capable of making a right use of.

I desire to be buried like the poor; and that no more than fifty livres be spent on my interment. There will not be any ready money found at my decease, for I have disposed of twenty-five thousand livres I had by me, as a restitution to the poor; and in future the overplus of my expences shall be dedicated to them; excepting fifty pistoles of Piedmont, which shall be reserved for any urgent occasion.

I recommend my wife and son to the protection of the Count; may he next to God be their friend and parent. I leave him no legacy, neither to the Countess, for I could not do it, without
retrenching

retrenching from the poor, for whom the Almighty has inspired me with such a renovation of kindness, that I could wish to give them whatever exceeds the simple necessities of life, and it is only in compliance with the advice of my director, that I reserve sufficient to support my rank.

I exhort my son to preserve for his mother and grandmother, the great respect I have endeavoured to inspire him with: let him remember that all is vanity and vexation of spirit, save loving and serving God. How gladly would I blot out with my blood the great number of years I have sacrificed to vanity, inutility, and vice. I have passed in the world for an honest man, and have fulfilled the idea commonly annexed to this character by men, but I confess that in the sight of my Creator, I am a guilty wretch, having no hope but in his mercy. I wanted a christian education; my son will not have this excuse; and should
be

he be so unhappy as to swerve from the good principles instilled into his mind, I renounce him for my child; and I affix my last benediction on him, according to the obedience he shews to his virtuous mother, and his respectable grandmother.

As I flatter myself, my dear mother, the perusal of this will make the like impression on you it has done on my sister, I hasten to send it you, though she will take a copy with her. Such were the dispositions of the Marquis the evening preceding his death, and what he had resolved to perform had life been longer lent him. Will you not say with my sister; he is in the bosom of God?

From

From the Count to the Countess.

I Write you but a few lines, my love, because I am resolved not to stay here longer than eight and forty hours. Our excellent mother herself presses my departure on account of your situation: she supports our loss with that christian fortitude which derogates not in the least from sensibility, but which gives strength to sustain it.

Our journey was very happily performed, and during the course of it, as at Turin, the dear Marchioness offered to my contemplation a more than human virtue. Her mother, consummate in goodness, thinks no advantage equal to it, and incessantly returns thanks to heaven for having given her such a daughter and such a son-in-law.

Madame

Madame du Montier to the Countess.

THE Lord has decreed our beloved Marchioness to be a woman of sorrows, my dear Countess.

Scarcely had she begun to assuage her tears for the death of the Marquis, than they flowed afresh for the loss of her son. This child appeared to be entirely recovered of the indispositions that made us so long apprehensive for his life; the exact image of his father, my poor daughter, seemed to have him restored to her in him, and had no other consolation, than in beholding him; but there are souls elect, whom God purposely and in mercy deprives of all human supports, and such a one is your sister. She beheld her child expire in her arms, of dreadful convulsions, which he had some years ago, but of which we thought him entirely cured. Can you guess what was her action the moment

moment he expired? She ran to the chapel, and placed his lifeless body on the altar, as a pure and unblemished hostage to the Lord. Through his grace, I am enabled to be resigned to his decrees, yet I confess with shame, I am not equal to the Marchioness; it is indeed impossible to conceive a more exalted virtue in a mind by nature so timid and full of sensibility. Her body, it is true, has not been able to bear up against this shock, and to keep pace with the heroic flight of her soul; it has sunk under the pressure of her misfortune, and she is at this moment dangerously ill; which has delayed the Count's journey, who will not leave me under my affliction. He says he is sure you would accuse him of cruelty, were he to abandon me on this melancholy occasion.

It is now, my dearest friend, that I am truly a widow, and bereft of all: all my supports are taken from me; your sister Emily is in a jaundice, that is
 thought

thought to be dangerous: she implores me to suffer her to die a nun, that is to pronounce her vows if the doctors decide that she cannot recover; by this implicit obedience I recognise the reality of her vocation, and permit her to do whatever she likes, whether she lives or dies. I should be overwhelmed with such accumulated misfortunes, did not Providence mercifully permit me to regard them in the most consolatory light. It brings to my recollection the Spartan Matron, who, upon being told that her son had been killed in fighting for his country, replied; I brought him into the world, cherished and educated him for that purpose solely. May I not with much greater reason say; I brought my children into the world in the firm hope that they would go to heaven; if they attain unto it, are not all my wishes accomplished? My tears flow for myself; I would fain follow them, but am obliged to continue in this land of exile. You will be my
sole

sole consolation, my dear Countess; you will shew yourself worthy of such sisters and such a brother-in-law. Were I an instant to doubt the blessedness of this last, I should think myself highly culpable: he must be, he is in a state of bliss, and with this idea I address my prayers to him as also to my little angel, that they may obtain for me the fortitude I want; and for your sister, I will not say the continuance of life, I fear it is only a selfish wish that prompts that prayer, but the consummation of her piety is what I implore, and this moderation is an inexpressible torment to my heart.

I am writing at the bedside of my expiring faint, who, though consumed with a burning fever, is so tranquil, that were it not for the quickness of her pulse, and the crimson die in her cheek, one would not suppose she suffered any thing. She receives whatever is given her, and breathes not a wish for either life or death.

death. I restrain my tears in her presence, not from the fear of adding to her sorrow, but from shame at testifying such weakness before such virtue.

The dear saint desires me to assure you of her affection, and to entreat your pardon for all the offences she may have committed against you.

She is just going to receive the sacrament: this is the fifth day of her illness: the medical people think her too weak to sustain the crisis, and declare that the least increase of fever will carry her off. It is expected to come on at three in the morning, and it is now nine at night; imagine in what a condition I shall pass these fatal hours. I am continually on my knees beside the bed, which I consider as the altar on which my beloved Isaac is bound, ready to receive the stroke of death; God Almighty grant me the faith of Abraham!

This dreaded night is past, and my dear Marchioness still lives; my Isaac will

will come down from the mountain on which he was going to be sacrificed; the angel of the Lord has commanded the fever to stop. Last night I told you I was ~~on~~ my knees beside the bed; the Count was by me, and really we resembled two culprits waiting their final sentence. Our eyes immoveably raised towards heaven, except to count the movements of our dear patient. It was unnecessary to feel her pulse to know her situation, the progress of the fever was visible in the throbbings of her jugular veins, which made me shudder to contemplate. Every minute I compared with the preceding one; for my watch was on a chair by me, on which from time to time I was obliged to lean, to preserve myself from fainting. At two o'clock I was covered with a cold sweat, and almost as near death as my poor daughter. The Count insisted upon my withdrawing, but this I could not agree to, and to keep up my strength,

strength, I swallowed some cordial, the name of which I have forgot. At a quarter before three, when my eyes were rivetted on the Marchioness's neck, and looking in horrid suspense for the redoubled movements of the arteries, which were to increase about that time, I perceived with ecstasy that they began to slacken; I made the Count remark it, and when three o'clock struck, the pulsation was hardly perceptible. They flew to inform the physicians who slept at the castle, and who on examining the patient, transported us with joy, by assuring us the fever had left her, and that unless some new accident happened, there was every thing to be hoped for. Grief I had supported, but I sunk under the opposite sensation, and they thought proper to bleed me immediately. Your sister fell into a doze, and slept very composed for five hours; they were not afraid of waking me to tell me this good news,

and the paleness of her face rejoiced me as much as could her perfect recovery. She has passed the day very quietly, so that the Count will set off to-morrow morning, and will follow this letter speedily.

Take care of yourself, my dear Countess, both in mind and body; and make use of every opportunity of mortifying your pride. I very much commend your present of the china vase.

The Count to Madame du Montier.

INDEED, my dear Madam, I am continually under the necessity of recurring to the promises of faith, respecting future rewards of sufferings here on earth, to be resigned without murmuring to the decrees of an almighty providence, whom I could readily accuse of rigour towards our much-respected

spected Marchioness. The heavy strokes of affliction succeed each other so rapidly, that she has not time to breathe. It is true, what I have to announce, is not to be compared with those she has already undergone, and that her great soul and yours will not deign, perhaps, to call it an evil; yet at all events I flatter myself you will allow me to arrest the course of injustice prepared against you.

You know that the nearest relations of the deceased Marquis, were two cousins, descended from a brother of his grandfather. These people, though possessed of genteel fortunes, could not see the rich succession of their cousin devolve on another, without feeling disappointment and jealousy. They pretend that the wealth he has left behind him was substituted, but on what they found this substitution, of which I never heard the least mention, I know not. The great grandfather of the Marquis once, in a fit of ill-

humour with his son for having married against his will, had some intention of doing such a thing; but a reconciliation being effected soon after, it was never more thought of. Your disinterestedness, my dear Madam, must have no weight on this occasion; consider, the Marchioness will be penniless were they to prove what they assert, and though this will be to her of small importance, because of her contempt of riches, and because she is sure of being always mistress of mine, yet I beg of you to reflect, that she is merely the depositary of that of the Marquis, who thought it safely assured to his son and to the poor, by investing her with the disposal of it. Her regard for them and for justice, requires her to defend her husband's last will and testament. The fortune she would resign, would become a source of calamity to its iniquitous possessors; let her then spare them the commission of so many crimes: she can do it with the greater facility,

facility, as I will take upon myself the whole trouble of the lawsuit. The Marquis appointed me her protector, and I will fulfil the duties this title enjoins. I therefore beg, that on the receipt of this, you will send me a letter of attorney from her, and be assured this is the only time I will trouble her about this business, which I solely undertake.

My wife was happily delivered of a daughter six hours after my arrival: it should seem she had waited for me, for she was seized with her first pains in embracing me. I wrote to you immediately after by a friend who was setting off for Bellay, and was to call upon you on his way; but I hear he is still at Turin, where some unexpected business detained him, and so completely engaged his attention, that he forgot to put my letter in the post.

Just before I began this, I was accidentally sitting by the Countess's bedside,

side, when they brought her some broth, and casting my eyes upon it, it looked so bad, that I was tempted to taste it, and in my life I never eat any thing so execrable. Surprized and vexed to the last degree, I enquired how long she had had such stuff, and found it was the last of what she had drank through the night. My wife, who durst not say it was good, assured me it was passable, and, upon my refusing to agree with her, told me with a smile, that she had so good a constitution, that such trifles would not injure her, and, after all, added she, I am much better served than I deserve. One of her women who was present, assured me, after I had quitted the apartment, that I had seen but a sample of what Madame was forced to undergo from her fury of a nurse, who treated her worse than a dog: that her broth was very often quite cold and covered with grease, that

that she made her call ten times for drink, and was cross whenever any of them gave her what she wanted.

It is you, my dear Madam, I have to thank for this excess of virtue: you will do so well, that your daughters will in time become saints; to this I consent with all my heart; but as I have no wish to be a widower, suffer me to moderate a zeal that may deprive me of a wife who resembles in no respect the one you formerly gave me. That was a lion, this one is a lamb: the whole house adore her now, and I assure you I spread universal joy throughout it, when, by virtue of my sole authority, I dismissed the Megæra, who so terribly abused the Countess's desire of suffering. She expressed great concern at her being turned away, as, she said, she served her to her liking; but I am no longer the dupe of this expression, well knowing what it means; and when she found I was resolute in not permitting this woman
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to come near her, she sent her five louis d'ors, with an assurance, that she should always find a friend and patroness in her. In this I leave her at full liberty to do as she pleases; let her serve her at a distance, I shall revere her motives.

Do not be angry with me for having removed this creature from about my wife: in any thing that will not affect her health, I give her a *carte-blanche*; but for the rest, I hope you will insinuate to her, that to mortify self-will by obedience is a great virtue: not that I have any cause to complain of her in this or any other instance; I am only apprehensive of her fervour and zeal.

This letter will inform you of two things; the first, that I have received yours, in which you tell me of the Marchioness's recovery, excepting the weakness resulting from her severe illness, which will go off by degrees; the second, that the chicanery set on foot against you is a mere trifle, as the manner

ner of my regarding it will convince you. Our new comer is the perfect resemblance of her dear aunt ; judge then how fondly I shall doat on her.

Madame du Montier to the Count.

THIS last trial was alone wanting to my dear Marchioness, who has so great an aversion to a law-suit, that at the first mention of it, she declared her willingness to lose all rather than plead. Though I am not entirely of her opinion, and though I agree with you that justice requires her to defend her property, more especially as it appertains to the poor, yet I confess, the smallest law-suit is a very great evil, and before entering upon one, we should try all methods of accommodation, nor scruple to make advances, and even concessions to those who attack us, though they do it wrong-
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fully.

fully. On this condition only could I obtain my daughter's consent to a letter of attorney, which she signed with tears. She entreats you will first minutely enquire into the circumstances of our adversaries; you have heard they are rich, but perhaps it is far otherwise, though their necessities may be unknown to the public.

Poverty, unaccompanied by integrity, is a dangerous adviser; it plunges weak minds into extremities they would never have thought of in less trying circumstances. God forbid I should arraign his providence; it is always the poor man's fault when he turns to a bad account, a very meritorious condition; but in fact it is a fault he frequently commits, and it behoves the rich to remove, if possible, the temptation to error. Should you then discover that want has prompted the chicanery they practise, my daughter begs you will repair their deficiency in the goods of fortune.

I say chicanery, supposing it should be one, for either the substitution is real, or it is not: if it is false, the suit must die of course, or rather it will be impossible to commence one; if, contrary to your expectation, one should be subsisting, we do not wish to split the cause, either my daughter as inheritor, or myself as legatee. Poverty does not offer itself to our sight under the hideous aspect it wears to the world in general; on the contrary, we regard it as the parent of moderation, and many other virtues; besides, my daughter can never be poor; she has jewels and plate to the amount of a hundred thousand livres, and she cheerfully declares, that by disposing of these gewgaws, she shall have wherewithal to succour the unfortunate. The issue therefore cannot afflict her or me either; her paternal abode will offer her an asylum, should she be expelled this splendid castle, and she will probably find, under
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its humble roof, that peace and tranquillity that have fled from her while she inhabited in gilded palaces.

Even should there be no substitution, yet, if these people have any legal pretensions, listen to their proposals, and sacrifice whatever will purchase peace; it can hardly be bought too dearly.

Yes, truly my dear Count, I have conspired to make saints of my daughters! the conjuration has likewise extended to my sons-in-law. One is now in heaven, where I hope in time to meet yourself; but whether I leave to the will of God the moment that is to reunite us; or whether my faith is too weak to desire its speedy approach; certain it is, I highly commend your care to preserve your wife as long as possible. She performed what was incumbent on her in retaining this woman, and she ought also to submit to your dismissing her: this is agreeable to order, and I therefore approve it.

I can-

I cannot say as much for an action you concealed from me, though it bespeaks the goodness of your heart. My daughter Emily has just sent me an unsealed letter, which I enclose in this; she took the veil within these few days, and tells me, that her jaundice was apparently lodged in the folds of her worldly habit, since she was cured almost as soon as she had cast it. But laying aside this hyperbole, which seems to announce a miracle, she means, that the joy of having the prescribed term abridged, has done more for her, than could all the disciples of Esculapius; no offence to these gentlemen, for whom I have a great respect, and that considerably augmented since my daughter's illness; for though the Almighty has certainly restored her to me, yet he made use of their ministry to confer this blessing; and you were witness that their proceedings were perfectly right and unanimous, a thing remarkable, for
they

they seldom agree together, and in general, the multiplicity of doctors kills the patient.

But pray admire this digression upon phyfic, occasioned by a jaundice that Emily no longer labours under. You would infect her with a much more dangerous malady, my dear Count ; (do not be offended with my frankness,) but I leave her to explain herself.

Embrace your Countess for me, to whom I wish all possible goodness ; happiness she cannot want while she is dear to her husband. Present the little girl to the Lord in my name, (you did not tell me what you intended to call her,) and beseech him to remove her from this world, if she is in danger of forfeiting the inestimable gifts she receives at her baptism.

From

*From Emily, Madame du Montier's third
Daughter, to the Count.*

My much honoured Brother,

ACCEPT, at the same time, my most sincere and grateful thanks, and also my refusal of your pension of three hundred livres. I will not say I was displeased with your offer, far from it ; it was to me a proof of your friendship, and has increased my idea of the felicity I shall enjoy, in being associated with the saints that compose our community. I was not tempted to make use of this pension, and if I had, I should here have found the necessary aid to vanquish this impulse of cupidity.

Our community is very poor, which is one of the reasons that induced me to choose it. Should I have sought for a profusion in the house of God, which I had no right to expect in the world ?

Like

Like St. Peter and the apostles, I shall leave only nets behind me, and I would willingly leave them with such good will, that at the day of judgment, I may say with them, Lord I have left all. He who reads all hearts, and who sees only in mine what it has pleased his holy spirit to inspire, knows that I have done it; and with equal pleasure would I reject a proffered crown.

We are supported by the house, my dear brother, and we work for our maintenance, but the bare shadow of a separate property is held in abhorrence. Our work, which is dealt out to us by the superior, and which we silently accomplish in one common hall, passes from our hands to those of the depository, who causes it to be sold, and joins the profit to the common stock; nor does the most skilful among us claim a farthing, or pretend to any thing more than the infirm and awkward. Whenever it happens that we cannot
 refuse

refuse a present, it never sullies our hands, but is given to the superior, if it is money, or carried to the infirmary, if it is sweetmeats, without her who received it knowing to what purpose it is appropriated.

Twenty years have elapsed since our worthy abbess established the house on this footing, and as she sets the example of the most rigid abstinence, some of the oldest nuns have resigned their pensions, and would not receive a pin more than the lowest of the sisters. I have told you we sometimes accept presents, and I am happy to have it in my power before my profession, to shew you the use I make of yours.

The church is unroofed in the part where the peasants, our neighbours, assemble, to hear mass, which renders it unwholesome for these poor people. I will therefore take the first year's income to repair this inconvenience, and you shall be numbered among the benefactors

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to the convent, and remembered in the daily orisons offered up for them.

I respectfully embrace my sister and her little family, and remain, &c.

My youngest sisters commission me to present their respects. They are not tired of their residence here, but they quit it with pleasure to rejoin one of the tenderest and most valuable of mothers, and a sister whose exalted virtue far outdoes the best of nuns.

The Count to Madame du Montier.

AND you, my dear madam, you also take the part of this little flatterer, who so politely talks to me of temptation, and gives me to understand that I am the tempter. O, upon my honour, it is hardly credible, and in my whole life I should never have imagined that a novice, and still more her community, would

would have refused presents and pension. I had some nieces who were under my guardianship, and who thought proper to take the veil; and willingly could I have said with Father Surin, that it took as much to fit out a ship for the Indies, as to furnish the equipment of a nun. When I quote this father, it is not because I am of his opinion: a monastic life has so many vexations for a girl of birth and understanding, that it is but right she should have some compensation in the thousand little pleasures she may require, independent of her community.

All I wish, is, that they would know when to limit their desires, and preserve a medium, between a total abstinence beyond the attainment of man, and an insatiable cupidity; for certainly the convents, such as these where my nieces are, resemble the palaces of some Asiatic monarchs, you are not permitted to approach them empty handed, without

without incurring the risk of little bills that circulate through the year for coffee, sugar, &c. You cannot think I mean to reproach the poor recluse for such trifles, but only for an avidity discernible in them; and yet, whenever I feel this emotion of displeasure, I am ready to accuse myself of barbarity. I shall not exempt you, my dear madam, from the like charge, if you will not persuade your little novice to accept my small donation; it is really so moderate it cannot interest the spirit of poverty itself. The good abbess, who, she observes, sets the example of this evangelical virtue, is notwithstanding, very sure of wanting for nothing, but surely in a house where such abstinence reigns, the same cannot be said of the inferiors. Permit your daughter then to receive this trifling indulgence; the nuns will not deny you this favour if you will request it. She is just now under the influence of her first zeal and enthusiasm,

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asm, but life is long, and human infirmities are as much the appendage of a nun, as of the rest of mankind.

A time may come, when the dear moralist will regret the comforts her excess of piety has induced her to relinquish: besides, it gives consequence to a girl in the eyes of her community. My nieces are made very much of in theirs, because they are enabled to bestow little favours on those who have no resources from their family: they are innocent gratifications, and ought not to be withheld from them.

I do not hear that any thing is doing by the late Marquis's cousins, and I begin to penetrate their motives for making such a bustle.

The Marchioness's inestimable character is well known here, but of this perhaps you are ignorant, that with three parts of mankind, that excessive charity, which she so largely practises, passes for a weakness, of which they are at liberty to profit.

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They were therefore persuaded, that at the bare mention of a law-suit, my sister would be so terrified, that she would consent to any thing they thought fit to propose; and you must confess they were not mistaken in their conjectures. They do me the honour to suppose me somewhat more firm, and as I purposely made known that she would not interfere in the business, as a proof of which I shewed her letter of attorney to everybody, they probably thought they should gain nothing by their tricking, and have therefore receded from the attempt.

My wife yesterday carried her child to church, whither I accompanied her to execute the commission you gave me; though it would really be a pity were the little creature to die, she is so very handsome. You have a sort of Roman virtue, which I can only follow at a distance.

Madame

Madame du Montier to the Count.

YOU apply to a wonderful good person, my dear Count, to find an advocate for the relaxation of rigidity in religious houses : let me assure you, my daughter would never have obtained my consent to enter one resembling that in which are your nieces. They may be faints, if you please, but I do not aspire at any belonging to me, possessing the same sort of sanctity ; or rather why should I play the hypocrite ? Those circumstances are very rare in which nuns can be excused from — I really cannot frame this apology which comes neither from my head nor my heart. Suffer me, therefore, to be silent with regard to others, and to speak only of my Emily.

I would much rather see her dead, than know she had abridged any part of the sacrifice she has made, or is about
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to make to the Lord ; she has imbibed my ideas respecting the perfection of the state she has entered into, and I am not afraid of her reproaching me at the day of judgment, with having exalted them too highly. I no sooner perceived the bent of her inclinations, than I observed to her, that a nun was one, who, anticipating the hour of death, renounces the world and its concerns as effectually as she will be obliged to do in that terrible and awful moment.

The condition of a corpse is the model of hers ; wholly separated from the world, it sees, it hears nothing of what passes in it ; all the wealth and honours in the universe cannot produce in it one desire ; it is stripped of every thing, and is wholly uninterested in the spoils which others share without its interference. So ought to be the person engaged in a monastic life, without which, the ceremony of putting her under the pall would be a child's play,
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an act of hypocrisy, a lie. How wretched those who come from under it, alive to the world, and reclaim any one of those things they have just abandoned with their lips; their offering like that of Ananias and Sapphira is a sacrilege, they have lied to the Holy Ghost, and I would say to them, as St. Paul said to that guilty pair, your land was your own, you were at liberty to keep it.

Your bodies, your liberty, your wealth were yours before the religious vow, you need not have pronounced it, but having once done it, you cannot, without sacrilege, reserve a part of your possessions.

We have given up with all our hearts, says Rodrigués, considerable establishments in the world, and we come at last to set our affections on a book, a penknife, and such like fooleries, to which we are more attached,

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than the men of the world are to all their possessions.

And where is the difference, whether we are fastened to this life by a cord or a thread? The one and the other equally prevent our flight to heaven. I will shew you the situation of a nun who has not learned this important truth.

It is certain, the sacrifice we make to God in the cloister, however perfect it may be, does not root out the wretched seeds of cupidity and other vices; the same soul dwells behind the grate and the lattice, and the sole advantage to be derived from retirement, is a greater facility to avoid the fatal effects of passions, by the absence of those temptations that nourish and keep them alive.

The more perfect is this separation from the three sorts of concupiscence, of which St. Paul speaks, the more easy will be their salvation, and their life

more sweet and tranquil; but if one door is left open to desires, they will return in crowds, and render the last state of that person worse than the former.

Had my daughter the three hundred livres you designed for her, her wants would be doubled; the multiplicity of imaginary ones, would make her avaricious, she would think more of thirty pence, than you would of fifty pistoles, and where then would be her vow of abstinence?

Your nieces would tell me their money was kept by the depositary, and that they durst not demand it without permission from the abbess; but this permission it is customary never to withhold, and she who requests it, relies so much upon receiving it, that she would think herself wronged, were it denied. What distraction must it occasion in their prayers, studying how to lay out their pension, which they would

gladly increase to the equivalent of their fancies! what mean and paltry arts do they employ to procure indulgencies!

It is a saying, a nun gives a plum for an egg; she makes little works of fancy which she distributes to those who will be sure to repay them handsomely; sugar, coffee, sweetmeats, are sent; she locks them up, she makes a treasure on which her whole heart is fixed. What temptations to jealousy are these to the poor and less-qualified nun, who beholds, with secret discontent, the inequality between herself and her sisters. Besides of what use are these dainties? Have they not the same portion with the rest? To the sick only these comforts are due, and they will receive them from the infirmary; from the hand of obedience, which dispenses nothing hurtful or improper, whereas, self-will is productive of evil.

You will tell me, a nun is sometimes very glad to regale her friends in the convent,

convent, or those who visit her from without; that she has leave so to do, and from obedience claims this little recreation. Unhappy are the houses where such licence is given; unhappy are the girls who avail themselves of it. Particular friends to a nun! they are the poison of communities, the fruitful source of hatred, animosities, and quarrels. But, you will add, in the greater part of these houses, they allow only bare necessaries, and sometimes not them; know you not, that too often superfluity is regarded as simple necessities? They are certainly to blame if they let the nuns want through ill-nature, avarice, or economy, but this does not vindicate the individual. To be poor, is to want common necessities in many respects; consequently, a good nun is happy that she can effectually realise her vow of abstinence. Everytime she practises this virtue, she roots out a plant of cupidity, and at length emancipates

cipates herself entirely from its tyrannic sway. It is then she makes a rapid progress in the narrow path on which she has entered.

Fasten no chains, I beseech you, my dear Count, on my Emily's feet; let her be detached from all, since it is her choice, and that she has promised the Almighty to be so. Had I the wealth of kingdoms, I would not sully her hands with presents, (to use her own expression;) I would give to her community, not to her. I love her too well to set a stumbling block in her way.

I am very happy, the affair you dreaded is not likely to be attended with any bad consequences, but the Marchioness still persists in desiring you will obtain an exact knowledge of those people's situation. Her husband's relations are intitled to her benevolence, and justice places them at the head of the poor whom she would succour. She enjoys perfect health; but her apparent com-
posure

posure does not deceive me. The death of the Marquis, and that of her son, have made two deep wounds in her heart, which will bleed for a long season, supposing they should ever be healed.

We expect my two youngest girls this evening, and I trust their presence will divert our grief; the Marchioness is very impatient to see them.

*From Madame D***, a Benedictine Nun,
to Madame du Montier.*

Madam,

MY uncle the Count D*** having mentioned to me a letter he had the honor to receive from you, expatiating on the duties of a monastic life, curiosity prompted a wish to see how a lady residing in the world would express herself concerning our obligations; and
I will

I will frankly own you occasioned much surprise in our community; even I myself could not help thinking your doctrine insupportably severe; but my uncle having given me leave to copy it, as also another from one of your daughters, I have re-perused them in private, and confess they have excited great trouble in my mind.

I am not at all happy, notwithstanding the pains I take to be so, and now I am certain of being less so than ever: your letter has banished a sort of peace and security which compensated for the unpleasantness of my situation. Let me entreat you to complete the trouble you have wrought in my mind, or else to reassure me, for I have great need of one or the other.

In order to put this into your power, I must give you a short sketch of my history.

Our family consisted of five children, four daughters and a son, and the moment

ment of our birth determined our destiny. My brother and my eldest sister were intended for the world, my two sisters and myself for the cloister. We were placed in this house at three years of age, and I did not chuse afterwards to quit it. My sisters spent six months with their family before they took the veil; but I obstinately refused to accompany them, not wishing to increase my aversion to the state we were forced to adopt, and the event proved my determination right, for I am now less miserable than they are.

Our convent is governed by an abbess who has no more liking to a monastic life, than any of us, and out of forty nuns, you would not find ten inspired with a true vocation. The policy of relations has made some, a residence from infancy, or some other motive that has no affinity with God, has created others. The lady abbess, not ignorant of this, and one of the best creatures imaginable,

does all in her power to alleviate the miseries of our situation, by granting us every indulgence that depends on herself. Our house is rich, but inconvenient; there is a good deal of building going forward, from which we should greatly suffer if each of us had not our little resources.

We are tolerably well fed, we clothe ourselves, by means of a small sum, not nearly sufficient for that purpose; we have a vast deal of mass, and attend it pretty regularly, unless we are indisposed, and we need not be very ill to obtain a dispensation. The remainder of the time is at our own disposal, and each one amuses herself according to her taste. Some receive company in the parlour, and these constitute the largest number, where they are at liberty to eat with their relations and friends; others have formed a society in the house, or between themselves, or with the out-pensioners; some, again, never

never leave Madame, and these are her favourites, though I cannot at all accuse her of partiality. It rested with me to be of the number of these last; but I preferred being something of all.

In the little town where our convent stands, resides a good deal of nobility, and some of wit and understanding. Among these, I have friends, who frequently visit me. My brother and sister dying childless, my mother, who has survived them, and repents her sacrifice of us, spares no pains to ameliorate our situation. We each have a room elegantly furnished; she has paid the portions of three lay-sisters to attend upon us, has provided us with linen and clothes sufficient for our whole lives, and we have some plate, and a good sum of money, which the abbess allows us to keep. We at present make no use of it; but my uncle, who liberally supplies our wants, is not immortal; we must

must therefore have a resource in time of need.

After this detail of my mode of living, you will perhaps conclude I am happy; but indeed, my dear Madam, it is quite the reverse. I lead a genteel, secular life; but, in spite of myself, I too often remember I am a nun. At first, this reflection gave me pain; but they comforted me with the assurance, that our lives in this abbey would be always the same. When I pronounced my vows, I did not pretend to higher perfection. They were not after the rule of St. Benedict, for here there is not the least vestige of it; consequently I shall not be judged by that rule. My morals are pure, my attachments under the laws of the strictest prudence; yet I have attachments; will God impute them to me as a crime?

For the rest, I cannot but own that I fulfil my religious duties from custom, routine, and necessity: was I my own mistress,

mistress, I would go less to the sacraments; but the rules of the house must be obeyed. What would the rest say if I absented myself? They would think me guilty of some crime; whereas my fault is lukewarmness, and involuntary disgust. Your letter has troubled the security I was taught to feel; tell me speedily, Madam, I intreat you, that the duties of those benedictines, where your daughter is engaged, differ entirely from those that oblige poor girls, who never had a wish to take the veil, to such a degree of perfection, or rather have the goodness to speak with sincerity on my situation. It would be very melancholy to purchase an eternity of misery, by a life so insipid as that I now lead.

You may address your answer direct to myself: the letters are carried to the abbess for form's sake; but she never opens them.

To

To any one but you, I should conclude, with promising you my prayers; but you will judge of their efficacy by the foregoing epistle; it better becomes me to recommend myself to yours.

The Answer to the preceding.

Madam,

YOUR request occasions me a great deal of confusion, and had I not a firm trust that God would receive glory from my answer, and will reward your humility, in addressing one so much your inferior in virtue, I certainly could not obey you, by stating my sentiments on what you have communicated. Eternally blessed be the Author of all goodness and knowledge, who frequently puts his word into the mouth of the

weak

weak and feeble. In his name, and after invoking his holy spirit, I proceed to reply to your questions.

The monastic life is undoubtedly the most exalted state of christianity; and to engage in it without a proper calling, is a rashness, often punished with the most dreadful chastisements. But there are many kinds of vocations; the first is that of allurements: such as are favoured with it, have so lively a sense of gratitude, that one can hardly call their sacrifice meritorious, so easy is it to them: they would see crowns at their feet unmoved. This sort of vocation is most liable to the danger of lukewarmness; the extreme fervour abates after the pronounciation of the vows; the rigours of the state, which before were disregarded, begin to be felt; and unless the mind is uncommonly firm, it sinks into languor and disgust, because it had looked for a satisfaction, which, if it were permanent, would dispense
on

on earth a portion of that felicity which belongs only to the blessed.

The second calling is that of faith: a person having carefully examined her heart, finds it will be too weak to withstand the temptations of that world, to which it is attached; she shudders at the necessity of renouncing it, and reflects with horror on the hardships of a life of retirement; but the alternative of being wretched here or hereafter, determines her, and she sacrifices present happiness for eternal. This one, like her who became a nun from religious enthusiasm, also finds a mistake; but it is of a favorable kind: she expected misery, and she finds unhopedor comforts. These generally make very good nuns, especially if they reside in regular houses, and they commonly chuse none other.

In fine, the third vocation is that of necessity and reason: it originates in the crimes of parents, who immolate innocent

cent victims to avarice, to an immoderate love of their favourite children, whom they seek thereby to aggrandize: this, Madam, is your case, and that of a vast many others.

It was not your own act; you were dragged to the altar, at an age, when you had neither strength of mind nor experience sufficient to object against the violence offered to your inclinations. Your irrevocable engagement in the fight of men, leaves you wholly free in the fight of God. With him it is the will must consent. If yours never accorded with the vows your lips uttered, you are at liberty before him who reads all hearts, and your vocation must become the fruit of pious reflections, suggested by enlightened reason. Examine what decision yours inclines you to make. Your exterior engagement, though a misfortune, is irremediable; if you are not dead to the world, the world is dead to you. You are there
regarded

regarded as no longer existing, and nothing can restore you to the rights of a daughter and citizen, which you were made to resign. On the other hand, this world, from which you are excluded, does it possess all the charms you figure to your imagination? Let us see to what its advantages may be reduced.

To the enjoyment of riches, which a thousand accidents may take from you, which are never adequate to the desires that are continually multiplying; to the demands of luxury, of fashion, and ridiculous etiquette, of which how little is requisite to our real comfort! Passion demands it, but it militates against the true spirit of christianity. Liberty, a privilege prized above all others by a man, is supposed to be enjoyed in the world; but believe me, my dear Madam, it is a name without a reality. Its inhabitants labour under real and continual restraint.

Constraint

Constraint in the state of celibacy.—

What attention, what care is required of a girl to preserve a fair and untainted reputation! for this, she must not only be prudent, but must beware of giving the smallest opportunity to enemies, to the envious, the idle, the prudish, to all those who take a malicious pleasure in sifting the conduct of those they wish to injure, and who view the most trifling imprudencies, through a microscope, that metamorphoses them into crimes.

Constraint in society.—To live in it with comfort, you must for ever bend to the caprices and humours of others, live for them, and not for yourself.

Constraint in marriage.—The happiest are those who reap in it the fewest chagrins, for no marriage is exempt from them. Trust me, Madam, did this state admit a term of probation, few would afterwards engage for life.

Constraint in pleasure.—By partaking of it, you hazard your salvation, or by foregoing

foregoing it, you are subject to eternal tantalization. It is easy to renounce it entirely, but very difficult to be moderate in the use of it.

You have not therefore lost much by being forced to give up the world; and, beyond all doubt, you have gained considerably. You are a christian, and consequently persuaded, that the events of life are not conducted by a blind chance, but by an Almighty Creator, for the final good of his Creatures. Your parents' intention in making you a nun, was to enrich two of their children, and the design of the Lord was to save you, by permitting them to commit this act of injustice. He foresaw that you would be lost in the world, and that, at a riper age, you would be unwilling to quit it.

Admire then his wisdom and goodness. He suffered the iniquity of your parents, and concealed from you the right you possessed, of objecting against it

it, that you might be happily necessitated to yield yourself wholly to him. This is the only alternative faith and reason now afford you; but to derive all the benefits you may expect from this sacrifice, which must now become voluntary, it must be entire, and without reserve. Lose not then the precious advantages your Creator, with wonderful address, (if I may use the expression) has prepared for you. You are now in the strait and narrow path, and such it will be, till you tread it with firm steps: the road will then widen before you, and very soon you will bless the beneficent hand that has placed you in it.

Shall I tell you how to pass with rapidity this thorny piece of road? Your heart must freely participate in those vows, which, as yet, your lips only have uttered: you must chuse the Lord as your sole portion, with an unfeigned and hearty desire. Ah! Madam, you must
be

be avaricious indeed, if this infinite good does not satisfy you. Deem not the observance of these vows painful or severe; they exact no more than what every pious christian is compelled to adhere to. By that of chastity, you consecrate your body and heart to God. This last is required, even of those who enter the married state; the love of their husband must be but secondary to their love of God; and the former should always yield to what is due to the Supreme Being. Now this love, so purified and refined, and absolutely necessary to salvation, is far more painful than an absolute renunciation of it; and again, with how many pangs is it accompanied? How seldom, if ever, does the most affectionate wife, find a return of affection, equal to what she might expect? How often is her's lavished on a contemptible creature, from whom, instead of the love she might hope for, she receives nothing but cold civility?

civility? The husband, the most indulgent to her caprices and humours, who is eager to prevent her every wish, in a word, the tenderest and best of men, is always less so than the wife; which causes to her a state of so many pangs and disquietudes, as those only can conceive who have experienced it.

From him who is your portion, you have nothing of this to apprehend. He will not only render you love for love, but that he bears you will be so transcendant, that yours will be only as a spark of fire compared with the sun.

True, he is jealous, nor communicates himself to those but what are his without reserve; and hence the reason that so many nuns are miserable.

They practise reserve with a God who will have all or nothing, and thus limit his tenderness towards them. I will not dissemble with you, madam; his love is so delicate, that the smallest derogation

derogation will wound it. Now it is extremely difficult for a nun, who has one foot in the world, and the other in the cloister, to preserve her heart undivided when she meets with an object who makes an impression on it; from that time, farewell to the peace and security of a monastic life.

The first thing, therefore, you must resign for God, are the parlour visits, and private intimacies. The observance of your vow of abstinence will be no longer painful, if these are thoroughly accomplished.

When you contemplate your Saviour and Redeemer, naked, poor, and stripped of all for you, you will feel a solemn detestation of your luxury; forgive this word; a nun indulging in elegant furniture, in plate and hoards of money, is another Cræsus; eradicate speedily from your heart, your attachment to these miserable gewgaws, as my dear
Marchioness

Marchionefs calls them, and you will very soon throw them entirely from you. Put them in the balance with everlasting glory and felicity, and see which will preponderate ; for choose you must, the one or the other.

I need not expatiate on obedience, with such an one as you describe your lady abbess, it can be no very hard task ; and besides, the immeasurable length of my letter terrifies me. A thought strikes me, my dear madam. You have probably heard of my eldest daughter ; the Count, her sincere admirer, has doubtless been lavish in her praise ; and though it may seem misplaced in a parent's mouth, yet I can assure you she borders on perfection ; but this perfection, how hardly has it been attained ! the recital of her sufferings, methinks, would make your situation appear very easy. I shall transmit it to your uncle, and trust to his discretion to communicate it to you,

too happy, if in that, or any other instance, I can prove how sincerely I am,

Madam, &c.

Note. To this nun, the public are indebted for these letters. It may be remembered, that Madame du Montier promised them to the Marquis, and transcribed them with this intent. The Count afterwards becoming possessed of them, imparted them to his niece, who derived so much benefit from their perusal, that she thought herself authorised to copy them for her further edification, and after the death of most of the parties interested therein, she gave them to a friend, from whom I received them to give to the public.

The Count to Madame du Montier.

DO not be alarmed, my dear madam, at what I am going to tell you. Those who call themselves the Marquis's heirs, begin to talk loudly of a substitution, which they pretend subsists at some village lawyer's at the extremity of the king's dominions, on the Milanese side. A more palpable falsehood there cannot be: not one of the Marquis's ancestors ever lived in those parts, nor perhaps even travelled through them. They threaten me with this fabricated piece through the person who has the Marchioness's letter of attorney, but who just now is out of the kingdom. I wait their attack with the utmost composure, and I believe my determination, which they are acquainted with, to support the cause with vigour, delays their proceedings.

The Countess owned to me in conversation the other day, that she once had the impertinence to say you were ignorant of the art of living at a court, where you had never been, and consequently unfit to dictate her conduct there. She was certainly mistaken in this notion, but I think I do you no injustice by the belief that you are as unknowing in matters of chicanery, as you are capable of giving precepts and advice to live virtuously and suitable to all conditions and stations in life. Leave then to me the former of these sciences, and continue, if you please, to exercise the latter.

My niece is quite enchanted with a letter you have written her; she says you have converted her, and in truth, I begin to credit it, for she goes no more to the parlour. She writes me word, that you have promised her the history of our dear Marchioness's life; have you really written it, madam? It
indeed

indeed deserves it, and still more from your own hand. As it is to pass through mine, I partake in my niece's impatience.

Such a life, such a biographer ; two circumstances highly capable of rendering the work inestimable in my eyes. Ere long, I trust you will have another subject equally worthy of your pen, and the history of my dear Countess will be no less interesting. The change wrought in her is next to miraculous ; one can hardly persuade oneself that she was ever any other than mild and gentle ; it is —

While I was pouring forth the grateful tribute of my heart for the happy change of disposition in my wife, I was interrupted by the entrance of a man, who, paler than death itself, stammered out a thousand apologies for the necessity his profession laid him under, of failing in respect to my lordship. I instantly guessed he was a bailiff,

bailiff, and so he proved. I assured him he might acquit himself of his duty without any risk of incurring my displeasure, which seemed to set him at his ease.

It was the famous substitution he came to announce, and I was so impatient to see this morsel of iniquity, that I hardly gave him time to explain the purport of his visit. Some friends, well versed in the law, maintain it to be so palpable a falsehood, that there will be no sort of difficulty in confounding the imposture: we must, however, litigate, and I am resolved to perish, rather than suffer the triumph of wickedness and perjury. Ere long I am convinced I shall have the pleasure to behold the downfall of the inventors of this forgery, with those also, who have aided and abetted them in it. Public interest demands that such wretches be exterminated from the dwellings of men, and I would give the half of my fortune to see them racked on the wheel.

The

The subject agitates me so much I can write no longer, and am scarce able to assure you how sincerely

I am, &c.

P. S. My counsel exclaim against any offers of accommodation, and say it would be giving weight to our adversaries pretensions. Permit me, therefore, to abide by their advice, and let me likewise entreat you not to trouble the Marchioness about it. I shall have triumphed over their injustice before your answer can arrive.

Madame du Montier to the Count.

TAKE my word for it, my dear Count, you boast a bravery you do not possess, or if it is real, I must tell you that you understand nothing at all about law-suits, and that I am an absolute proficient in them compared with you.

I was

I was obliged to sustain, or rather terminate one in my life, that had been pending thirty years, and at last, what did we gain by it? A law-suit is a perfect hydra; notwithstanding my ardent desire to finish it, and the permission my deceased husband gave me to employ what money I thought proper, I was two years in bringing it to a close. The adverse party would have all, or nothing, and my conscience would not suffer me to see my children reduced to want. Had it regarded only myself, I verily believe I should have preferred it to being the innocent cause of the hatred, the invectives, and other crimes this hateful suit occasioned to my enemies.

You will retort upon me the same observation, my dear Count: did this affair concern myself alone, I would abandon it, but it regards the interest of the widow and the poor; duty therefore enjoins me to prosecute it. Certainly

tainly it does ; in this view, proceed as far as christianity will permit ; but in what case I would ask, does it countenance your hating your neighbour ? Now this fellow creature whom you would hang or break on the wheel, you cannot say you love him ? Observe, my dear friend, how watchful is your adversary the devil, to deprive you of the merit of a good action : for one it assuredly is, to restrain fraud and violence. Take notice how he sets about it. Under the aspect of love, under the feint of justice, he, who is the parent of all mischief, with this respectable form, gains admision to your breast : turn the snare against himself : plead, if it be necessary ; provided enmity and ill-will have no share in your interference, the Almighty will not be offended at it. And why should you hate our opponents ? First, as I before mentioned, it may happen justice is on their side, or if otherwise they may not know it, and

are perhaps the dupes of some rogue of a lawyer. In fine, supposing them to be partakers in iniquity, ah! should you not rather have compassion on them? If they prevail against us, and get possession of our wealth, we shall not deserve commiseration, but they will, who purchase future punishments with our spoils. I beg, I entreat you will not be a partaker in their guilt by your hatred of them. Pardon them the trouble they are about to give you, as you hope that God shall pardon you. This is my old doctrine, or rather that of the gospel.

I obey your injunctions respecting the Marchioness, well knowing the greatness of her soul needs no preparation for the probability of being less rich. She would think herself highly favoured by the Lord, were she to become absolutely poor.

The Count to Madame du Montier.

Dear Madam,

I THINK it right to apprise you of a very extraordinary visit you are going to receive, and also of the melancholy circumstances which occasion it.

In vain would I conceal the horrible injustice done to our much-beloved Marchioness; sooner or later you must know it, and indeed it is my duty to prevent certain formalities which could only serve to aggravate her misfortune. An act most notoriously false, has been declared valid, consequently, the jointure of the respectable widow, depending on this property, falsely said to be forfeited, is lost. Seventy-four thousand livres, which the Marquis borrowed three years ago to ameliorate his estates, are likewise lost to three families who advanced the sum, and who are thus reduced

reduced to indigence. The pensions assigned to his late domestics must of necessity drop, for they will not surely be paid by his iniquitous inheritors.

You know my heart and fortune, my dear and much-respected parent; the one assures you the other; and do not imagine that my large family can be any obstacle to the fulfilling those duties and obligations yours and my sister's situations demand.

You will tell me, you have more than the simple necessities of life; to which I can return the same answer for my children. In making over a part of my property, they will still have a good independance, exceeding their merits, could they ever be base enough to regret what I am resolved at this time to do, whether you consent or not.

This letter will precede only one day *Mastrilli's* arrival at the castle. In the embarrassment and confusion inevitably

tably attending a precipitate removal, he has undertaken to conduct you, and to stand in my place; for you must evacuate the castle without delay. I would not certainly resign so precious a charge into the hands of another; but for two reasons, which retain me here. The first is, the ill state of the Countess's health, who is far advanced in her pregnancy; the second is, that *Mastrilli* wishes to profit by this opportunity, to make some overtures of a design he imparted to me, immediately after my return from you, and which he would not allow me to mention till the Marchioness's year of widowhood was expired. He is the only one, who does not lament the failure of our law-suit; on the contrary, he rejoices at being able to lay at her feet, a fortune, capable of indemnifying her for the injustice she has sustained. He takes this step with fear and trembling, for I make no secret to him of the difficulty I apprehend in persuading
my

my sister to form a second engagement; though I cannot inform him, that what constitutes, in this case, the greatest obstacle to his happiness, would ensure that of another. Her delicacy will represent to her, as a crime, the sentiments she once entertained for him; and I should utterly despair of the success of his enterprize, but for my reliance on you: and to induce you to second us, let me intreat you, Madam, to consider the advantages resulting from such an alliance.

Mastrilli enjoys an income of sixty thousand livres a year; he has two hundred thousand livres in ready money, with which he offers to pay the Marquis's debts, and acquit his legacies. Justice alone should incline you to prevail with the Marchioness: the re-establishment of three respectable families, whose ruin her husband has innocently occasioned, is concerned in it. It will enable you to settle your
two

two other daughters, and to support many useful establishments for the poor.

The Marchioness is but just turned of thirty; the man who offers her his hand, has saved her life; he was held in very high estimation by the late Marquis; and I can solemnly assure you, that my dear deceased friend has frequently said in confidence, that if he died before his son was grown up, he should wish his widow might give him a father in *Mastrilli*, whom he thought worthy of her.

Weigh well these circumstances, my dear Madam, and give them their due weight with the Marchioness. I am certain this affair rests solely with you, which induces me to let my friend depart. You are no strangers to each other's merit, and cannot, I am sure, withhold your esteem. On personal acquaintance I know you will desire him for a son.

My

My wife unites her intreaties with mine, and notwithstanding her situation presses me to leave her, that I may add strength to your solicitations and arguments in behalf of one with whose merits she is well acquainted, they are such, that I cannot sufficiently wonder at her preference of me to him, who am so greatly his inferior.

The Answer to the preceding.

YOU would do me great injustice, my dear Count, did you suspect me of having omitted any effort to determine my daughter in favour of *Mastrilli*; not that I was alarmed at the situation to which she is reduced, or dazzled with that presented to her acceptance; they are the merit and amiable qualities of this nobleman, that make me regret not having him for a son.

Were

Were I to use only the language of the flesh, I should say, my beloved child had not been happy in her former marriage; you know, as well as myself, that the clouds that obscured her best days, succeeded each other so rapidly, as scarce to leave her any intervals of repose; but I am a christian, and, in that sense, can only regard her sufferings with the eyes of faith. They were necessary to her sanctification, and she might probably lose, in a happier state, the treasures she has acquired by them. To enable you to do me justice in this affair, I will give you a detail of the conduct I pursued. Your friend, I am very sure, will tell you, it is not my fault he is not happy; he himself is convinced of it.

The virtue and fortitude of my child needed no previous preparation to announce to her that she was absolutely ruined; and, but for the circumstance of *Mastrilli's* coming, and his designs,
I should

I should have made use of no precautions to inform her of the loss of her cause ; but, upon mature consideration, I thought it best to defer it till I had talked with your friend. I therefore, upon reading your letter, told her, that *Mastrilli* having some business of importance to transact in France, you had desired him to see us *en passant*, and that he would arrive the next day.

As I said this, I observed her countenance, though without appearing to do it, but could not perceive the least emotion from this intended visit ; on the contrary, she told me it would give her a degree of pleasure, as she was sure he had felt the loss of the Marquis, and she should find consolation, in mingling her tears with his. This commencement made me augur well for your undertaking, but I confess I reasoned very badly ; I might have discovered that there remained not in her breast one spark of the regard she formerly dreaded,

dreaded, otherwise, his near approach would have excited either emotion or constraint. At supper she renewed the subject, and praised his good qualities with a warmth that effectually duped me.

The day following he arrived, as you had said, and his first appearance made on me the most favourable impression: not that I was charmed with the depth and brilliancy of his understanding; the most sensible man in the world always makes a ridiculous appearance when he is in love, and is uncertain of his fate, and our hero did not come off better than another. He pretended he could make but a very short stay at the castle, and, to my great astonishment, the Marchioness told him, he owed us at least a fortnight.

I need not say what was the subject of our discourse for the two first days: we lamented our loss as if it had been recent, and the friendship and regard
this

this young man evinced for the Marquis, gave me the highest opinion of his heart. The day after his arrival he contrived a tête à tête with me, when he was more eloquent than in company with the Marchioness, and after promising to second him to the utmost of my ability, he hinted at the necessity of taking measures for leaving the castle, before we were compelled to it. This I thought would be a favourable opportunity for his declaring his sentiments to my daughter, and therefore agreed to inform her of the loss of her fortune in his presence. He was penetrated with the tranquillity and composure with which she received this account; only when I spoke of the three families involved in her ruin, she was quite overcome. O God forbid, exclaimed she, then, pausing a moment, added, no, my dear mother, they certainly shall not lose a farthing. You may ensure to yourself that promise, replied

plied I, if you will accept the resource providence holds out to you. At that instant, *Mastrilli* threw himself at her feet, and this action sufficiently explaining the nature of the assistance I alluded to, she coloured prodigiously, while he stammered out the offer of his hand and fortune. Recovering herself a little, she gave me a look, as if to reproach me for the species of treachery I had practised; and begging *Mastrilli* to rise, with infinite grace she thanked him for the generosity of his offers, but added, that she had taken a firm resolution to be faithful to her husband's memory, and that her vow was irrevocable. I then made use of the arguments you had furnished me with, to which she instantly replied, in such a manner, as effectually to silence me. She expected the loss of her suit, and had settled her affairs accordingly. The faithful valet of the Marquis, whom she retains in her service, had, by her order, carried her
jewels

jewels to Geneva, with an inventory of her plate, for which altogether they offer one hundred and eighty thousand livres, including some valuable furniture she has it in her power to dispose of. From this she proved, that, after paying her husband's debts, and what she herself had taken up to recompence his domestics, she should have left six hundred livres a year, which she thinks sufficient to live upon with me, or in a convent.

So then, said I, the poor will be the only sufferers? That is what rends my heart, returned she, but the Almighty will require no more of me, in this respect, than is in my power to perform; and though the aid he has destined them from all eternity will not pass through my hands, yet will he not permit them to be tempted by poverty, above what they are able to bear.

I had now but one argument left, which you had not alledged, and which

I re-

I regarded as my last resource. You have incurred other expences by your loss, resumed I, and have still large sums to pay, independant of those the Count has advanced, and which his generosity will not mention.

I could have wished, she rejoined, to have been chargeable to no one; my pride would perhaps suffer, by receiving assistance from any besides my respectable brother-in-law; but from him I confess I would willingly accept it. An income, more moderate than what I had computed, will suffice me, and the fourteen thousand livres on which it was founded, will serve to defray the expences you mention.

Then rising, with a sweet suffusion of pure delight on her countenance, she exclaimed; I thank thee, O my God, I shall return into the bosom of the earth, as I came into the world, naked, and destitute of all.

In

In finishing these words, she left us, penetrated with admiration, and retired to her closet.

Mastrilli, with tears in his eyes, asked me if I thought it impossible to change her heroic determination. I did not flatter him, well knowing it is from no inconsiderate folly, she has formed the resolution of continuing a widow: it is doubtless one of long standing, and I should be very loth to combat the religious motives that induced her to make it. I however attempted it in some measure; but returned with a fuller conviction, that my endeavours were unavailing. The rest of the day she employed in preparing to accompany me to the paternal abode, and entreated me to persuade *Mastrilli* to depart, and to assure him from her, that during her whole life she should sustain sentiments of the truest gratitude for his noble conduct on the present occasion, added to those she already felt for the

the

the services he had rendered her ; and that her esteem for him was very great. And is there nothing more, demanded I, smiling? With you, my dearest mother, she replied, I cannot practise concealment: I felt a momentary emotion, when I beheld *Mastrilli* at my feet ; but it vanished like a flash of lightning ; my heart is filled with another love, for which it is too narrow, and I am careful not to diminish its small capacity. She, who is not married, says Saint Paul, has no other care but that of pleasing God, whereas a wife is divided between him and her husband.

I know he addressed himself to virgins, but I think it equally applicable to widows. I have chosen the better part, my dear mother, rather pray that it may not be taken from me, than yourself solicit me to renounce it. It is the only circumstance in which I feel myself able to withstand your advice. God forbid, I replied, that I should

give you any contrary to what you think due to your creator; follow the path he has traced out for you; and rest assured, I will never turn you aside from it; but suffer me to beg, you will not insist on *Mastrilli's* departing so suddenly. I will inform him of your resolution in such a way, as to deprive him of all hope; and believe me, you shall be no more importuned with his addresses. After this promise, let me observe to you, that the Count has commissioned him to conduct us to Sens, and that I have accepted his offer.

I see it all very plainly, answered the Marchioness; my dear mother had entered into the conspiracy that was formed against me; *Mastrilli* has softened her, she regrets the loss of such a son; but I shall find means to set us all to rights again.

First, I may suppose, without doing him an injury, that he is extremely susceptible of the tender passion; though he

he cannot be accused of an everlasting constancy. He was very sincerely attached to Matilda, but despair effected his cure. The condition he saw me in, after my accident on the river, excited his pity, and in a heart disposed to tenderness, pity naturally leads on to love. I am very sure, my last misfortune, if so you persist in calling it, has produced his present sentiments, which are not so alarmingly violent, as to make me apprehensive of the consequences. It may easily come to pass, that to console himself for my refusal, he may fall in love with one of my sisters, and, frankly speaking, I shall not pity her to whom he offers his heart, though it be but in the third degree. These children have not imbibed, from pernicious novels, that false delicacy, that prevents women from accepting the addresses of a man, because they are not the first to whom he has paid them. I therefore consent to his being our guide, relying too

much on your word to apprehend his importunities.

I related this conversation, word for word, to *Mastrilli*, except what related to my youngest daughters, and convinced him of the impiety of endeavouring to overrule the Almighty, to whom the Marchioness is resolved to consecrate the remainder of her life. I assured him of her highest esteem, and added, that had my daughter thought of a second marriage, he would have had no cause to dread a rival, for that she did ample justice to his merit, as a further proof of which, I accepted his offer of conducting us to our household gods.

We shall set out in three days, my daughter requiring this space of time to dispose of her effects. *Mastrilli* is delighted with this delay; for he has something to do at Lyons, whither he is going post; and, as he says it will be settled in two hours, he promises to return to us with all speed.

After

After I had retired to my apartment for the night, *Mastrilli*, who had taken his leave after supper, on account of setting off early in the morning, asked leave to speak with me alone. I was much amazed, to behold him on his knees before me, and still more so, when he declared he would not quit that posture, till I had granted him the request he was going to make. As I thought it could no longer relate to the Marchioness, I assured him, he would afford me the highest possible gratification, by informing me, in what I could oblige him. He rose with transport, and forced me to admire his generosity, though he could not prevail with me to accept his offer.

It was, he said, a mere trifle; only two hundred thousand franks I must take, to finish my daughter's affairs. An impulse I was unable to resist, and which I confess to be a real imprudence, made me suddenly exclaim, What would I not give for such a son?

To

To which he replied, in the same breath, What would I not give for such a mother? Will you believe it, I embraced him; but positively assured him, I should offend the Marchioness beyond redemption, and should myself be deficient in delicacy, could I consent to what he desired. He really seemed more hurt at this last refusal than at the former, and quitted my apartment in an agony of despair.

You have raised my fears for my dear Countess; tell me, I beseech you, whether her illness is the effect of her situation, or of some other cause. I am indeed a true example, that the objects best calculated to promote our happiness, become sources of a thousand anxieties. What mother was ever more blessed in her children? And yet what mother has suffered more uneasiness from them?

As your letter cannot reach me here, you must direct it to be left at the post-house at Sens.

The

The Count to Madame du Moliere,

I AM completely silenced, my dear madam, by the reasons that have induced our dear Marchioness to withhold her consent from a union I had desired with the greatest ardour; she certainly was not happy in her first marriage, and if we may credit appearances, she would have found with *Mastrilli* all that can be reasonably expected of happiness in this life. But her ambition is more unbounded; she desires a felicity unmingled with woe, and it is only in her kindred heaven she can possess it.

Were I less acquainted with her superior virtue I should doubt her ability to preserve the exemplary resolution she has formed. Still so young, so handsome, without children, without fortune: all seemed to solicit her compliance with our wishes. She alone
has

has refused an establishment which a thousand others would regard as the *nec plus ultra* of bliss. She will not cast a look behind her, but, like the children of Levi, will have no portion on earth, because the Lord is her portion and inheritance; she truly merits and for ever will claim our warmest admiration. But hold, there is one point on which I cannot praise her; no offence to her exalted soul; she is the last in the world I should suspect of excessive pride. The arrangement of her affairs is perfectly stoical, and I beg you will tell her from me, over and over again, that I am inexpressibly shocked and vexed at it. The fine idea, to live upon four or five hundred livres a year! what, shall I enjoy an income of twenty thousand, the half of which suffices for my expenditure, and shall a sister envy me the unspeakable satisfaction of applying my overplus to her necessity? I am quite provoked when I think of

it;

it ; and my wife is no less so. I say nothing of the humility of a christian, which does not blush to receive benefits, since Jesus himself subsisted doubtless upon the benefactions of the rich ; for we do not find that he had any other fund for himself and his disciples : I speak only of the duties of friendship. It is the common opinion, that the most glorious part appertains to the giver, and that the case of the receiver is extremely unpleasant ; this I positively deny. I have somewhere read, but where, I have forgot, that the perfection of friendship consists in accepting, without repugnance, the gifts of a friend ; it is the touch-stone whereby to estimate the reality of those sentiments that unite men together.

It requires but the effort of a common soul, to share one's fortune with an indigent friend, the pleasure resulting from it is so supreme, that it becomes a reward of a hundred fold. I ask then, if the

Marchioness feels that return of friendship for me, which I have a right to expect from the engagements we have entered into on this head, might she not conceive the satisfaction I should enjoy in being able to serve her at so small an expence? Can she stile herself my friend, and yet from false delicacy, deprive me of one of the sublimest gratifications, of which the mind of man is capable? No, it cannot be. To reject such trifles, is to question the sincerity with which they were offered; it is wounding a friend most cruelly. I assure you, I never will forgive her, if she makes the least mention of reimbursing me one farthing of the costs of suit. Nay, so far from being entitled to any indemnification, my conscience obliges me to offer her one. Did she not through you desire me to propose a compromise? And certainly, from the uncertainty of the success of their ascality, our adversaries would rather have

have accepted a part, than have risked the whole. My counsel would not suffer me to follow this prudent advice, consequently her poverty is my doing: ought I not, therefore, to repair the evil I have occasioned? Besides, the expence was very inconsiderable, for though our proofs were not strong enough to convict our opponents, yet the presumptions in our favour were great, which induced the judges to divide the costs.

The Countess is entirely recovered from an indisposition that made us apprehend a miscarriage, and the medical people affirm, she will complete her nine months. Immediately after her confinement, she intends accompanying me to Sens, for which visit we have obtained six months leave of absence. Should your views respecting *Mastrilli* be realised, it will add much to our happiness, for I do not know a greater reunion of good qualities, than is to be found

found in this young nobleman. I confess to you I have given him a hint of this sort in my letter, for I have too good an opinion of him, to suppose he can attribute our desire of his entering our family to his riches.

The Count to Signor Mastrilli.

SUSPEND your decision, my dear friend, and read to the end of my letter before you pronounce me a fool or a man of sense. Most heartily have I wished that your castles might be destroyed by fire, your lands washed away by torrents, your bankers might become bankrupts, and that thieves might rob you, and leave you stripped of all on the highway. And when you was reduced to this pitiable situation, what think you we would do? Why, with the utmost cheerfulness, we would come and offer you a wife who should bestow every philosophic good, and
many

many inestimable blessings besides. Yet hold, among the many excellent things this marriage would procure you, there would be found one to abate their value, which yet must be included in the bargain: this would be a good for nothing brother-in-law, who sorts very ill with the rest of the family, which same personage is no other than myself. In other words, my good friend, instead of advising you to hang yourself because the Marchioness will not be your wife, I exhort you to embrace the only method of belonging to her in spite of herself, by marrying one of her sisters.

Think not of replying to me by vows of eternal constancy; this is a chimera, existing only in books, or if elsewhere, it is in the breasts of fools. Understand me right, I speak of a constancy unsupported by hope. One is weary of loving on credit, and of course change our object, but here lies the danger you do not foresee. During
the

the space of ten years, or seven at least, you have nourished a hopeless passion. After your first flame, you protested to me, love never again should take possession of your bosom; and you will say as much now with the like success. A state of apathy is not compatible with your years: accustomed to the trammels of love, the heart must be fixed on some object, and this necessity blinds it as to the worth of that object from which it hopes to derive assistance to throw off the languor that oppresses it. You might thus be tempted to cast away your affections, in a manner unworthy of the first flame that had ennobled our hearts; I say ours, my dear friend, for I knew the Marchioness before you did, that is to say, I adored her before she had been offered to your sight; in this only my melancholy history corresponds with yours. I respected the sacred ties that united her to the Marquis, and the virtue of this beloved
object

object was so dear to my soul, that I verily believe I should have died with grief, could she have been capable of relinquishing it even in my favour. This strongly breathes the spirit of an Amadis, but is nevertheless strictly true.

I wore my chains for a length of time like a miserable slave, without the smallest hope of ever breaking them, till my good genius inspired the idea of seeking aid by changing my object. The recipe succeeded so well, that I think myself bound by our mutual friendship, to impart the secret to you.

What distresses me in offering you one of my sisters-in-law, is, that you are rich, and they are poor. In good earnest then, I wished all these disasters might befall you, to set you more upon a level.

Make trial of my experiment; I hear the two little ones are perfect beauties, and as to character, nothing but

but excellence can come out of that family: and though one might not be eminently good on entering it, one has at least an ardent desire to become so.

*From the Marchioness of ***, to the Count.*

YOUR letter, my dear Count, is a series of calumnies and false inferences. Prepare quickly for your trial, I am going to examine your cause, that is to say, your letter, and reply to every article one by one.

That I have a vast deal of pride, is a truth I will accede to as much as you please; but that it is from pride I reject your offers, is an absolute calumny. The reason is simple: I do not think it degrading or humiliating, to accept what is merely necessary for ones subsistence,

sistence, when one cannot procure it for oneself, but I deem it base and criminal to take any thing more, and for this plain argument, a friend's superfluity appertains to the poor; in this quality I may claim my share, and provided I do not exceed bare necessities in the benefactions I consent to accept, I see nothing that ought to mortify me; but were I to take more, I should feel humbled indeed. I should retrench from the poor, to whom you owe all you can spare. I should but receive it to distribute it to them, and I should be unjust in so doing. To friendship I should be indebted for your kindness, and in bestowing it on me, you would have only the transient gratification of being generous; whereas, the poor will owe your gifts to the motive of charity, and you will have the solid advantage of giving to the Lord through them by the division of your wealth, an advantage of which I will certainly not deprive you.

I know

I know exactly what you would reply to me. First, the obligation to share our fortune with the indigent, claims our relations as the primary objects; and to succour them is to please the Almighty. Secondly, I am in want of necessaries, false supposition. Do you know, my dear Count, that had I remained possessed of the Marquis's wealth, I should have been very sorry, had my own expences exceeded two or three hundred livres yearly! Do you know likewise, that in the happy abode where I am henceforth to dwell, factitious wants disappear, and real ones only are to be found, which are reducible to a very small number? Let me also add, that for ten years past I have suffered beyond expression from the pomp and splendour that surrounded me; that I sighed after the happy simplicity that now awaits me; that notwithstanding my desires in this respect, habits of grandeur and magnificence might

might have gained an empire over my mind, and that I regard the loss of these good things I might have abused, as the greatest blessing Providence could bestow.

Do not, therefore, envy me the treasures of poverty I am about to enjoy. If by the appointment of heaven I should ever lose the means of support I now possess, trust me, I will not wait for your offers; I will without scruple claim your assistance, even with pleasure, certain that I should be conferring one on you by acting without reserve. So then you draw a wrong inference when you accuse me of doubting the validity of your friendship, or the satisfaction with which you would lavish on me whatever is in your power. I believe it would be very great, though not superior to that I should have in receiving it.

Another calumny I must reproach you with; you assert, that I was not
happy

happy in my marriage: and on what do you found this fine reasoning? on my having undergone some portion of misfortune. I should never have imagined that a christian could have regarded misfortunes as obstacles to happiness. What! shall pagans have looked upon torture with indifference, and even with joy when the love of their country exposed them to the trial, and shall a christian repine when she suffers for the love of God? I cannot conceive it. Reform your judgment, my dear friend, and allow me to act according to mine.

For instance, I had determined not to mention the expences of my lawsuit, but to let you make me a present of them, because I must have taken from my requisite expences to have reimbursed you: but Providence will not permit you the pleasure of being generous, or me that of being obliged. It has sent me more than sufficient to
 acquit

acquit myself. I was offered at Geneva one hundred and eighty thousand livres for my valuables, and I have met with an honest Armenian, who has given me two hundred and twelve thousand: these are thirty two thousand that I may be said to have found by chance, and which constitute me a great and mighty lady. Let me then enjoy my opulence, for one of the principal joys it affords, is the ability to pay my debts. If, in spite of all reason, you obstinately refuse to say how much I owe you, I shall estimate it at twelve thousand livres, and distribute this sum, in your name, in our village. No rancour, if you please; I must not resign the gratification of being just, merely that you may have that of being generous.

I very much approve your views for *Mastrilli*; for whom my esteem is considerably augmented during our journey. I am not the only one of the family who duly appreciates his merit: my
 mother

mother is absolutely in love with him, and she is you know a connoisseur in worth. I do not think the offer of his heart would be rejected, though it be in the third degree, especially if he addresses my youngest sister, who is something of a favourite with me, doubtless because she greatly resembles me, for the *nous-mêmes* is always uppermost; but in the qualities of the heart and mind, she is infinitely my superior, in which my mother would agree, without any fear of mortifying my pride.

My other sister is likewise very amiable in her way, but she pleases less, from being extremely grave: she has so great a dread of a serious engagement, that her wishes are limited to the possibility of being always her own mistress. She ingenuously owns it is not from any singular piety, that she is averse to marriage; but from the love of independence.

I rejoice to hear of the Countess's recovery, and expect, with extreme impatience,

patience, the time of her confinement, and the moment of our meeting, that I may embrace both her and yourself, my dear Count, and assure you personally how sincerely

I am, &c.

Madame du Montier to the Count.

MASTRILLI has just been with me; he came with your letter in his hand, and really I was near expiring with laughter at its commencement. He prays you to retract your kind wishes, assuring you, he has no need to be stripped to the skin, to make him desirous of entering our family. True, replied I, but we must have wished you in a similar situation before we could propose it to you. He only answered, by dropping on one knee, and kissing my hand. Some moments after, he said, how can I offer a heart already re-
jected

ected by two of your daughters, and what opinion would you entertain of that heart that could I interrupted him, by throwing my arms round his neck, for my sixtieth year gives me great privileges. I shall think, said I, that it is the heart of man; for I adopt the Count's reasoning in its full extent. A hopeless constancy is a romantic virtue; and that love, that is injurious to duty, can never subsist in a good mind, in the place of a lawful engagement with an estimable and virtuous woman. I would say more on the subject, were you in our situation, and we in yours, or if I was not personally interested in the affair.

You are too scrupulous, Madam, replied *Mastrilli*; were I possessed of a crown, it could not compensate the happiness of belonging to you. I am too sensible. I cannot become the son of another, after having nourished the hope of being yours; and, if the charming

ing Henrietta does not think me unworthy of her, my utmost wishes will be fulfilled in uniting my destiny to her's. I confess her extreme resemblance to the Marchioness has not a little contributed to render me fickle once again.

I made no effort to conceal the joy this declaration gave me, and the Marchioness, to whom I imparted it, would not for a moment delay congratulating her sister on her conquest. I left it to her to sound Henrietta respecting this establishment, and, in the mean time, amuse myself with writing to you.

I was afraid Hortensia would be a little jealous of the preference shewn by *Mastrilli* to her younger sister, but my fears were groundless. Her motto is, Liberty for ever, and she rejoices at being able to preserve it without a struggle, which would infallibly have happened, had his choice fallen on her. Henrietta found no difficulty in obeying

me with a very good grace; so that we are all in a very contented situation.

The humble appearance of this abode, which has been my children's cradle, made no unpleasant impressions on *Mastrilli*. There are to be sure as many proofs of our ancient claims to nobility, as of our present poverty, and my future son-in-law was so engrossed with the former, that he appeared quite regardless of the latter. The supper bell calls me, I will finish my letter, when I retire for the night.

O we have had a scene worthy of the pen of Molière; but, that you may fully comprehend it, it will be necessary to tell you, that Forest, the deceased Marquis's valet, and now my daughter's man of trust, was not at the castle above a moment, during the time of *Mastrilli's* visit, and then probably did not see him. You may remember we wrote you word that he set out for Geneva with the Marchioness's effects, some

some hours after *Mastrilli* went post to Lyons.

This is what Forest related at his return. On his arrival at Geneva, he alighted, according to custom, at the white horse, and before he could take off his boots, a man, who called himself a Jew, came to him with some rings, pretending to have them to sell, and asked him if he wanted any. Forest allowed they were very fine ones, but said he had some much superior, and opening a small casket containing my daughter's, he desired to have his opinion upon them. The Jew, after examining them, owned they far surpassed his own, and enquired if they were to be disposed of; adding, that his father, who was a Jew of Armenia, was going into France, charged with a considerable commission in diamonds, that he would pay ready money, and, he was very sure, would give more for them than he could get at Geneva.

I have no sort of objection to his seeing them, replied Forest; but I have likewise a great deal of plate, which I want to dispose of at the same time. Is it in the modern fashion, asked the Jew? O, for that, returned Forest, you need not doubt its being in the first taste; the good gentlemen of Geneva, who are connoisseurs, will pay me for the fashion of it, that I may abate them twelve per cent. for their profit. I believe it, said the Jew, and if it is such as you describe, we shall be content with half.

Forest listened greedily to these proposals, provided the money was ready; yet he could not assimilate the possibility of paying so large a sum with the speaker's habit, which was much the worse for wear. The other, perceiving his doubts, said: do not be surpris'd at my tattered garb; it is a prudent precaution we travellers use to secure our treasures; but come, my father is in this inn,

inn, you need only therefore shew him your valuables, and may retain them in your own hands till you receive payment for them. This last proposal entirely removing Forest's mistrust, he readily followed him into an adjoining room, where was his father in bed, with his face covered with plaisters, for he had, he said, fallen from his horse, about a league from Geneva, and wounded himself in several places. He began, by examining the things with great attention, and, after having the plate weighed before him, he offered two hundred thousand livres for the whole. Forest objected, and required a thousand louis more: in short, after some difficulty, they settled for two hundred and twelve thousand livres.

The Jew then ordered a little trunk to be brought him from under his bed, from whence he took a large leathern bag, containing three thousand louis, which paid the amount of the plate; it remained

remained to settle for the diamonds, and a box of very fine laces, which the Armenian also purchased. He desired Forest to keep these, and accompany his son to one of the most eminent merchants in the city, who would pay the remainder of the sum. As Forest well knew this merchant, he made no scruple of going with him. My dear friend, said the banker to the Jew, I am very sorry I cannot accommodate you with the money you want; but relying upon your journey to Paris, I have remitted all my stock: pray inform me why you have alter'd your plan? The young man replied, they should still go to France, where they had other funds, but that, having met with an opportunity at Geneva, of purchasing part of the things they wanted, they had embraced it, as they were very valuable. 'Tis then of this gentleman you bought them, resumed the banker? These appear to be the diamonds of the Marchioness

onefs of ***. Upon Forest's replying in the affirmative, he added; I shall find means to settle this business. At present, I can only furnish fifteen hundred louis, but will give you letters of exchange, payable in the course of next month, for the rest; in the mean time, this good man shall keep the diamonds, for which I will be security to your father. They will be as safe in the Marchioness's possession as in mine, and, on your return from Paris, you can call for them.

Forest told the banker we were going to Sens; but this raised no impediment to the bargain; and, the day following, he returned to us with the money, the bills of exchange, and the diamonds. We were excessively amazed to hear of so honest a Jew, and a merchant so full of confidence, but we looked no further.

Forest set off a day before us for this place, to get the house in readiness for our reception, where we safely arrived
this

this morning. He had been too much engaged in settling the house, to resume his usual post, till supper time, which is that of superintending the other servants at table, where you know he always stands behind the Marchioness's chair. *Mastrilli* was seated between her and *Henrietta*, and was beginning a recital of some adventure during his travels, when I observed the valet listening to him with the air of a man who seeks to recall something to his mind.

He left his post, and standing behind me, he looked so attentively at *Mastrilli*, that this last coloured high with confusion. Are you ill Sir, said I? No Madam, it was only a sudden vapour; and *Forest* resumed his place. The next moment he repeated the like change of situation, and the same attentive curiosity, and every time *Mastrilli* spoke, he advanced to observe him with an appearance of uneasiness; and making a sort of exclamation to himself, returned

turned to his place behind his mistress.

It was some time before I noticed this manœuvring; at length, what is the matter with you, friend, said I, you cannot stand still, do you want any thing with my Lord? No, Madam, replied the valet, only I thought I recollected his voice; but his face convinces me I am mistaken. These words so effectually disconcerted *Mastrilli*, that I suspected some mystery, though unable to penetrate it; and I waited impatiently for the end of our meal, to get an explanation; when *Mastrilli*, reaching his arm across the table, for something in a remote dish, Forest seized hold of it, and drawing his hand towards him, considered his ring with great attention. Pardon me, my Lord, said he; I am a connoisseur in diamonds, these ladies know it well; but you probably are not much acquainted with that one, for you have not had it long.

in your possession. Thou art dreaming, my poor Forest, said the Marchioness, surely I have seen that diamond on his Lordship's finger for some years. Very possible my Lady, returned he; all that I know is, that I saw it in his son's hands not a fortnight ago.

His son, cried I? Yes Madam, continued he, bowing his head; but since that time, Signor *Mastrilli*, who was very old, has grown young again by twenty years, and has cut off his beard. This is the buyer of jewels, or I will go to the devil. *Mastrilli* in extreme confusion stammered out, this man is mad,—upon my word.... The bursts of laughter from the two young ones, allowed him no time to say more, and I was equally foolish with them; for spite of the fear of affronting him, I could not forbear laughing at his embarrassment. To put an end to our extravagant mirth, I called for some wine, and desired every one

one would drink to the health of the noble Armenian. Then giving him my hand, confess the fact, my dear Lord, said I, and permit us to testify the sincere admiration your ingenious liberality inspires.

The poor Marchioness only is entrapped, and the thirty two thousand livres over and above her expectation must be erased from the sum of her future expenditure, for she certainly cannot accept them.

How cruel you are, Madam, said *Mastrilli*. Even supposing this man to be right, which I do not at all admit, would you envy me the innocent pleasure of devoting a very useless superfluity to prevent the Marchioness from depriving herself of. . . . Of what, I pray, interrupted she? They are absolutely trifles, of which I wanted to be rid, and would match very ill with this mourning habit, which it is my determination to wear for the rest of my life. I really intended

intended parting with them before the failure of my suit. Your design was that of obliging me, by an augmentation of my income ; I will not then refuse your present, but if it is mine indeed, I am at liberty to dispose of it according to my fancy. Suffer me, therefore, to remit this sum to my dear Henrietta, or if you deny me this favour, allow me to remain as I am, by taking back your gift

A courier from yourself, my dear Count, interrupts me, it is eleven o'clock, ah ! my God, does it announce to me some new calamity ?——I revive, the Marchioness screams aloud, but the tone of her voice has nothing in it to alarm me. I would run to her, but my legs fail ; I hear her coming up to me.

The

*The Count to the Marchioness of ***.*

THAT the Almighty God never forsakes those who serve and love him, is a truth, of which we have just received so manifest a confirmation, that had my belief of it been withheld till this hour, I could refuse it no longer. But you shall have the detail of an event that has excited emotions of wonder and astonishment in the breasts of all here, and which restores to you the fortune so unjustly ravished from you by the blackest fraud and iniquity.

The day before yesterday, I went according to custom, to our sovereign's levee. He still retains a very high regard for your merit, and with infinite condescension, enquired particularly after you. I could not help informing him of your situation, and also of the magnanimity with which you had embraced

embraced poverty as the means of acquitting yourself honourably towards the Marquis's creditors.

The king listened with eager attention, and replied, it is impossible for the Marchioness to exist upon so small a pittance, write her word from me, that I allow her twelve hundred livres a year. I was beginning to express my lively gratitude for this goodness, when one of his gentlemen came and told him that a woman who seemed to be expiring, had had herself conveyed to the palace, for the purpose of revealing to him something of great importance.

The king ordered her to be brought into his presence, she came supported by two people, and the image of death seemed imprinted on her countenance.

Shocked at her appearance, he desired her to sit down, and enquired if she had any thing to communicate which

which he alone was to hear. No fire, replied she, would to heaven the whole earth could witness what I have to relate. At the foot of the throne I lay the remorse and lamentations of an unhappy criminal who has not four and twenty hours to live; but who will die in peace if he can make reparation for his crime.

My unfortunate husband, surrounded with children, and extremely poor, suffered himself to be seduced by two of the Marquis of ***'s relations. He fabricated, at their desire, a substitution, which puts them in possession of a very considerable fortune, and thirty thousand livres were to be the recompense of this deed. With this sum he determined to come and settle at Turin, where we have been only two days. Yesterday evening at eight o'clock he mounted his horse to go to one of his seducers, who lives about two miles from hence, and, in the space of a quarter

ter

ter of an hour after, he was brought back to me almost dead. His horse grew restive just as he had got out of the town, threw him, and trampling upon him, wounded him in several places. The first intimation I received of this dreadful accident, was from a crowd of people who accompanied him home; and being near my time, the fright brought on my labour, and I was almost instantly delivered of a child who survived its baptism but a few moments.

My husband earnestly demanded a confessor, to whom on his arrival he declared, that God had justly punished him for his falshood and iniquity, and desired he might be transported hither to reveal it at your feet. His strength would not admit of a removal, and I could not entrust any one with these writings, which will at once attest and repair his crime, and which his accomplices might possibly have found means to

to sequestrate after our death which must shortly happen. I would have given them to the brother of the lady we have ruined, but this, my husband would not agree to, lest he should be suspected of collusion with him; therefore, the sole method of obviating this, was to remit these papers into your majesty's hands.

In finishing these words, she presented a small portefeuille to the king, and fainted away from the efforts she had used in speaking. He commanded all possible care to be taken of her, and dispatched his own surgeons to endeavour at saving her husband's life, from whom he desired every information might be obtained. This man expired two hours after; having done whatever was required of him, and his wife, who was innocent of his crime, survived him only till this morning. I consoled her in her last moments, by the assurance that I would take care of five
small

small children, who are left in imminent distress, which promise I shall most religiously observe.

The portefeuille she gave the king contained a promissory note for fifteen thousand livres, being the remainder of the stipulated sum, half of which had been paid; also the copy of the deed that deprived you of your property, written by the Marquis's cousin himself. The king determined to seize the culprits, and issued his orders for that purpose; this I foresaw, and confess, my respect for the memory of my late friend, would not suffer me to leave them in ignorance of these proceedings. They took refuge in flight, and abandoned their families with a precipitancy that confirms their guilt. Their wives appear to be innocent, yet are not the less to be pitied; for this affair was no sooner publicly known, than a multitude of creditors fell upon them. The fugitives were immersed

immersed in debt, consequently, their wives and children are reduced to beggary.

There only require some formalities to annul the verdict pronounced against you, and the king being himself the solicitor, every thing will very soon be expedited. I could not wait till then to inform you of so unexpected an occurrence, and to congratulate you on the restoration of your fortune: I mistake, it is to the poor my congratulations are due.

My wife only waits her delivery to set out; and I believe I must have an order from our beloved parent to induce her to postpone her journey till she is properly recovered; so great is her impatience to see and embrace you.

The

*The Marchioness of *** to the Count.*

INDEED, my dear Count, I am less rejoiced at the recovery of my fortune, than grieved at the death of the poor woman, whom the Lord chose as his instrument to bring it to pass. Her children shall be mine, if you please; God in mercy has given them to replace those I have lost. I shall also add those of my unhappy cousins, whom I think myself charged by Providence to protect; now threefold my neighbours; as they are poor, as they are relations, and as the children of those who sought to do me wrong. O! my heart is too small to contain the excess of joy I feel, at the idea of conferring happiness on so many. I beg of you instantly, upon the receipt of this, to visit the wives of the two unfortunate culprits; assure them from me, they

they shall want for nothing, that I will support my cousins wherever they may be, that . . . Oh ! tell them all that charity can suggest.

I can write you but these few lines, because I will not detain your messenger, and besides I am intoxicated with bliss. This would grieve me, inasmuch as it might announce an attachment to the good things of this life ; but my heart does not reproach me on that score : it regards them as dirt, and sets no higher value upon them than according to the use to which I appropriate them. O, how many wretched beings I can now console.

Madame du Montier to the Count.

SHE says very true, that she is intoxicated with joy : she beholds nothing but these poor children snatched from misery,

misery, and a bad education; their unfortunate mothers passing from a state of despair, to one of greater tranquillity; and when she wrote her scrap of a letter, it was in the thought that your courier was to set off again immediately, without considering the hour, and his want of rest. How gladly would she purchase wings at any price to fasten to his heels, that he might hasten back with the consolation she entreats you will bestow on these two desolated families.

As for me who have contrived to preserve a small portion of sang-froid, I have sent the man to bed, and he is the only one in the house at present in that situation; I may soon say in the village: our people in the transports of their joy, have awakened all our neighbours to declare the happy tidings which spread like fire from house to house. All the inhabitants, some dressed, some undressed, come running to

our

our house. They embrace one another; and our old curate, his night-cap in his hand, (for he had forgot to put on his hat,) has so unmercifully scrubbed my chin with his grey beard, that it will feel the effects of it for a month to come. His vicar contented himself with kissing my hand ten times. One would think they had each gained a law-suit. I leave them to make merry in the hall with my daughters, while I hasten to write to you; for the Marchioness would soon clip short my letter were I to delay it till the morrow.

Your messenger passed through; I know not if by your order, and proclaimed there, that the Marchioness was re-established in her rights. While he was drinking a cup of wine, he painted the effusions of joy in our former vassals, in so lively and affecting a manner, as gratified us beyond expression. I can very readily conceive it by the
grief

grief they expressed at our departure, rather by howlings than cries. They passed the night round the castle, that they might not miss us in the morning; the mothers carrying the young children, and weeping over them, because, they said, they were going to lose their common parent. *Mastrilli*, to disperse the crowd that was gathered about the coach, threw amongst them a hundred franks, in pieces of twelve sous, but they would not deign to pick them up; and the poor creatures yielded only at length to my remonstrances, who represented to them, that their grief increased that of the Marchioness.

Your courier told us we might expect the village magistrates almost hourly, whom they instantly deputed to come and compliment us.

The law-suit between *Mastrilli* and my daughter, is at last happily terminated. He had the coffer brought in where he had locked up her plate, and
 2 in

in it we found a paper, declaring it to appertain to the Marchioness. Observe, that on his arrival, he had requested us to keep this chest, till he had settled some business at Paris, adding, that he would take it away with him on his return; which return you may imagine he did not put in his power to accomplish. In vain my daughter refused accepting it, she could not resist his importunities; it was, he said, a marriage present her sister Henrietta took the liberty of offering. She instantly acquitted herself, and choosing from among her diamonds whatever was most valuable, and would best suit her sister, she decked her out with them on the spot, which, together with her night-cap and dishabille, formed the most comic effect imaginable. She likewise put on Hortensia's finger a very fine and valuable ring, which this last received without the least emotion of joy. You will sup-

pose the comparison she made between this jewel and those of Henrietta, diminished its value; not so; I, who possess the key of her soul, know precisely the painful sensation that suspended her gratitude. She had nothing to bestow, while her sister made a present, or rather it was made, in her name: now the little creature loves vastly to give, but not to receive; she is the most generous girl I ever knew, even to excess; judge then of her situation. As nobody seemed to be in a hurry to sleep, we condemned *Mastrilli* to relate how he set about becoming an Armenian. He confessed that he had only the honour of playing a part in a comedy of which his banker was the author. He communicated to him his design, having some draughts upon his house, and he lent him one of his clerks to personate his son, which he did to perfection.

As

As we expressed our amazement that he could hope to find, in the course of a month, so considerable a sum as what the banker had given draughts for, he told us, that for this he was indebted to the avarice of his tutor. Being left an orphan from the age of six years, the good man, to whom his parents confided him, let him want almost every thing in his infancy, that the interest of his fortune might accumulate; and every year he deposited the produce of his œconomy in the banks of Venice or Turin.

In the intention of offering his hand to the Marchioness, he disposed of the funds he had in this last-mentioned place, and had left two hundred and fifty thousand livres, which he had taken up in the hands of a friend, on whom he had drawn bills equal to those in the banker's hands, which were to acquit each other. It is fortunate this nobleman did not make choice

choice of Hortensia, for, notwithstanding his immense wealth, he would have run the risk of dying in an hospital, since she would not have been willing to moderate the dictates of his noble soul.

He vows he will not take back one farthing of the fifteen hundred louis the banker has already paid ; and, to perpetuate the memory of this event, in a place that has given birth to what is most perfect on earth, (I give you his own words,) to perpetuate, I say, the memory of this blessed day in the village, he is determined to distribute this sum in it.

Hortensia highly commends this resolution ; the Marchioness, while one moment she is telling him he carries his liberality too far, the next enumerates the various distressing anecdotes of our canton, in so pathetic a manner, as would be sufficient to loosen the purse-strings of the greatest miser. I say

not a word; but my delight breaks forth in spite of me: for of what use is great wealth, unless applied to relieve the distresses of others? This conversation is carried on in the saloon, where we are all assembled together, helter skelter, masters, valets, peasants; all on a level, all ranks blended in one common felicity; O! it would form an excellent picture! Really, I forgot the best part of it: in the midst of our transports the Marchioness called to our minds that we were unmindful of the great Author of all, and, falling on her knees, set us the example of returning thanks and praises to the Almighty Giver of all good. At five o'clock in the morning I obliged the whole company to retire to bed, and I am now going to do the same, if not to sleep, at least to recruit my spirits.

Upon my word I have slept nine hours without waking once, which has not happened to me these ten years.

M 3

We

We have just roused your courier, who has amply made up for two sleepless nights, and, as soon as he is refreshed with a good dinner, will set off and travel all night. With some difficulty we brought the Marchioness to consent to this arrangement, on account of the intense heat; but every quarter of an hour she entreats him to use all possible expedition to get back to you: she counts the moments of distress that must intervene to her poor cousins, and her heart is oppressed with the idea.

Our good people say we have brought midsummer back in the month of September; every house has bonfires before their doors, and, to complete the universal joy, the deputies from . . . are arrived. Conceive what they did on approaching the Marchioness? They fell on their knees, and with loud sobs kissed her robe, unable to utter a word. O how ardently I longed at that instant, for those people of the great world, who

who are so greedy of pleasure, incessantly seeking it every where, and pursuing it in vain ! let them come, and, by witnessing our felicity, learn that it consists in making those around us happy. What melody, what concerts, comparable to the sweet sounds of benedictions that are now resounding in our ears ?

While we slept, Hortensia and Henrietta yielded to this luxury of bliss with all the enthusiasm of guileless youth ; and are at this moment so extremely wearied they can scarce set up. The cause is, they have not left in the village, or neighbouring hamlets, one single cottage that they have not visited in company with the curate. They have made a list of all their wants, and are now at *Mastrilli's* request, dispatching an express to Sens, with a cart, and inventory two yards long, to fetch from thence stuff, linen, mantua-makers, and taylor's, to clothe every individual.

They

They look as if they had not a day to live, and are as busy, as if one moment was to determine their eternal fate. Perhaps I ought to moderate their zeal, but have I courage to do it? Can I deprive them of the extatic sensations they now experience?

And I, said the Marchioness, shall I do nothing? O, I am resolved not to be the only idle person: I will marry six poor girls, and each of my sisters shall do the same; and what is singular, it shall be at the expence of the Armenian: in saying this, she had the great leather bag brought to her; a-propos, I forgot my mother, there must be six young girls married in her name: that will be four and twenty marriages; twelve thousand livres will just do the business.

I cannot sufficiently thank you for having favoured the escape of the criminals; their wives, doubtless, know the place of their concealment: should they

they be averſe to declare it, the aſſiſtance my daughter deſigns for them, muſt be adminiſtered through their hands. We muſt alſo . . . ; fold up your letter, ſays the Marchionefs, for our courier is mounted, and ready to depart. I will certainly not detain him one moment longer. Farewell.

Here ends this correſpondence, or rather theſe are the only letters we have been able to recover ; for Madame du Montier lived ſome years after, and doubtleſs continued her good advice to the Counteſs and her third daughter.

I have not been able to learn many other particulars of this family : different occurrences obliged the Marchionefs to repaſs the Alps, and reſide with the Counteſs, who quitted the court. While I was putting theſe

these letters in order, I received some very interesting memoirs from Germany, where the last of Madame du Montier's daughters was married. This is the one she calls Hortensia. I could wish to give them to the public, because they contain many useful lessons; but as everybody who is mentioned in them are still living, I make it a rule never to publish any thing that may hurt or offend. But the public shall not lose them; if I survive these people, I promise to bring them to light, if not they will be found at my decease, with instructions when they are to be published.

FINIS.

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